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STEEL CHIPS

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STEEL CHIPS

By

IDWAL JONES

NEW YORK

ALFRED · A · KNOPF

1929

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STEEL CHIPS

43341

CHAPTER ONE

A PERFUNCTORY moan died out on the air, and the pet macaw in the cage awoke with a shiver, gyrated its bald head, and rapped its beak mechanically on the frozen water-cup. It knew, having had a succession of masters who rose, muttering and sleepy, to that moan, that night was definitely over. But it was not until the whistle had sounded again that the present occupant of the bed stirred and cast off the blankets. Bram Dartnell sat up, yawned, and, after picking the price tag and pins from a crackling black shirt, and fitting a new pair of hobnailed shoes with leathern strings, dressed himself slowly. He poured himself a drink of port-wine from a carafe on the shelf and drank it in a gulp. He was dilatory that morning, from a heavy sense of oppression.

He threw a dressing-gown over his shoulders and went to the window, which the frost had rimmed with white fur. He thawed a spot with his breath, gave it a rub, and peered out. Opposite was the yard of the gas-works, and under the arc-lamp above the gate figures as rigid as icicles and with coat-collars turned up moved past in hurrying silhouettes, then vanished into darkness like spectres. The carbon sputtered and threw capricious gleams and shadows upon the dis-

coloured snow. It was an hour before dawn, and Veeder street was stirring to a realization of coffee and fried bacon and impending duty. The door was knocked.

Olga Mizinov, the Lithuanian housekeeper, looked in. She had red hair parted in the middle and done into buns at the sides, and in the candlelight, which did not betray the smallpox markings that had marred her face in infancy, she looked comely.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Your father's sore," she said with a burst of cheerfulness. "Breakfast is over, and the fellows that works over to the brass-foundry is all gone. I put some steak aside for you, but it's cold now. And there's some coffee."

"You should have known enough to keep the stuff warm."

She leaned her head against the door-jamb and spoke chidingly. "Don't you know you should have been down at six o'clock? Didn't you hear the whistle over to the Works? That black shirt looks kind of good on you. Old Mr. Gumber, who had this room before you—the old toolroom foreman that died here—well, he left some shirts that's maybe your size. I'll see if I can find them, and those white knitted ties he used to wear. He used to sit in that chair and knit them."

"Get out, will you?"

"Your father's waiting for you in the dining-room.

He hasn't moved. I don't know what to tell him. It's tough to have to quit school, I guess, but you know we all got to go to work some time."

She went, and Bram listened with a scowl as her footsteps creaked down the hallway. Her intrusion was unwarranted, and so was her advice, too gleefully uttered. Henceforth, it seemed, his life was also to lack privacy, and it was even probable that he would be routed out of his room, which for almost three years had also been his study. Besides the chair and the bed, it had a black horse-hair sofa with carved walnut back; a steel-engraving of the Battle of Antietam, that had belonged to his maternal grandfather, a print of King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid, and, pinned to the walls, pictures of classic fighting-cocks torn from the pages of sporting journals. On the hanging shelf were some Russian novels, Thoreau's *Walden*, the *Iliad*, Latin cribs, and text-books on algebra and chemistry.

A silver frame held a photograph of a young woman with a pompadour and a large cameo brooch. If that woman had not died, her son would not have left the Connecticut farm that had been her home to become again the ward of his father, whom he had not seen since his parents were divorced. She should not, from the genteel and worldly view-point that was hers, have married Peter Dartnell in the first place, but since she could not have loved anyone else, after having met him, it was perhaps just as well. As a fore-

man in the blacksmith shops of the Atlas he had gained a competence; as a prizefighter he had gained more than that, and also distinction, which was vaguely gratifying to her; but for her son she had other aspirations, since all the males in her family had done something in the law or the ministry, and when Peter plunked down a bag of dollars on the bar of his favourite saloon and became its owner, that struck a spark on the Plymouth Rock vein in her anæmic frame and she rebelled. She went back to her father's farm, and Peter went back to his many loves. And that, too, was just as well.

The macaw croaked. Bram gave it a pinch of seeds. Though known as "old Mr. Gumber's bird," it had been the tenant of this room and the companion of other great mechanics, chiefly foremen, for years and years. It was a born Atlas bird, and on Sundays and holidays, when the whistle did not blow, it slept through, like its current master, until noontime.

Bram dusted off his fingers and resumed his posture by the window. The spectral file had become a procession. That procession had marched under his window for almost a thousand mornings, but he had never given any heed to it, for it had occurred hours before his waking-time and was as extraneous to his life as the passing of clouds or the flowing of the distant river. Unlike all parades he had ever seen, this was not in the least diverting. There were five thousand or so workmen shuffling through the snow on

their way to the Atlas Ironworks. He looked upon them with a faint terror, an absorption so intense that it ached. The spectacle was both appalling and dramatic, for it was a mass in movement, shuffling on with heavy feet, swathed necks, and faces grey with the morning pallor, and motivated by the most primal of instincts, the need of bread. It was an act of God that had set it going, and it could not help itself. It was a manifestation of life that seemed to be reproving him because he had not all these years prepared for them when he should submerge himself in the flow and become an integral part of it.

He had seen nothing more solemn. The ludicrous is an invariable constant in solemnity, and the Poles met his eye. They had strawy moustaches and wore derby hats much too large for them. How was the affinity of Poles for oversize hats to be explained? On Sunday mornings when he went to the Carnegie library, he passed hundreds of them as they came down from the cathedral, all wearing large but new derby hats, and when these had lost their gloss, they wore them to the shop. It was surprising how many churchgoers were in the procession, and how very like beetles they looked with their bowed backs and greenish tail-coats. A vast amount of salvage was possible in decorous habiliments. A workman could buy an expensive broadcloth coat with tails and buttons behind, get Sunday wear out of it for years, and its respecta-

bility as a workaday garment thereafter would never die.

Some of the workmen—none of whom were on Sunday vergers or deacons—he recognized. They were frequent visitors in his father's saloon. For the most part they were mechanics who had served their apprenticeship in the Atlas, who wore celluloid collars, did their own figuring from blue-prints, and managed, because of their tacit equality with the bosses, to get home at least ten minutes before anybody else. He discerned Lem Porson, the general foreman of the main engine-shop. "The Hat-peg" was his title. In the saloon he had the familiar nickname of "Gears," because if anybody mentioned gears in his presence, he would shoot at him questions concerning pitch, diameters, double helicals, and formulæ and do his ugly utmost to trip him up. Usually he succeeded, for his staccato queries would have rattled even a mathematician. He was a master, always sarcastic and, more annoying still, always right. Ordinarily such a man would have been beaten up at intervals—"got his," as the shop slang went—but his virtuosity in gears earned him a protective respect.

There he was, treading by handsomely, alert and powerful, with the curling moustache of a policeman and a hard blue eye. Lesser beings sidled past him, with an air of apology and gaze fixed ahead. A buggy driven by a Negro appeared; under its raised hood was a stout old man whose beard jutted out above his

fur collar, bellicose and challenging, white from age and hoar-frost. Lolling back, with arms folded, he rode like a Goth advancing to battle in a chariot. It was Council Banks, the general superintendent. Porson touched his hat. Bram observed that there was no nod of the beard in response, and that Porson, after a glance about him to see if the cut had been remarked, consoled himself by stepping on more arrogantly than ever.

The whistle sent out another faint, throaty warning, and the macaw capered on its swing and made a noise like pulling corks. The workers went on more briskly, and the parade was thinning. Soon the street would be bare, then in half an hour would begin the second parade, which included clerks, engineers, and finally the hierarchy of executives, a few of whom, a very few, outranked even Banks himself. But Bram had seen enough and was moreover half frozen. He descended, passed through the barroom, which was warm and heavy with the smell of beer and hot grog, and entered the dining-room.

His father, with large hands resting on the table, sat looking steadily at him from under his beetle brows. He seemed to have been waiting there for hours. He sat under a large coloured photograph of Joe Walcott, the pugilist, which was flanked with crayon drawings of the famed Dartnell game-cocks.

"You haven't forgotten what I told you," he was saying. "And I don't have to speak twice around

here, you know that. Those mule tricks of yours are liable to earn you a thrashing like you never dreamed of." He dropped his fist on the table with a jar that rattled the dishes. "And, by God, I won't say I'd hate to give it to you."

Bram remained standing. The outburst was no more than he had expected. "You'll not find it as easy as it used to be," he said. "You can take me out of school, and you can throw me into the Atlas, but you'll not lay hands on me." His hand strayed towards a heavy coffee-cup.

"I'm tired of having these white-collared airs about the place," said Dartnell. He had affected not to perceive the manœuvre. "That's over with now, for good. Here's a chance for you to make something out of yourself, and you balk. Even after you know I spoke to Lem Porson about you. There's a man that means something, and he came out of his way to drop in here last night and ask when you were coming to work. Lem Porson himself!"

"Well, he means nothing to me."

"He will. You don't know what a man he is. He's got even Council Banks buffaloed. The trouble with you is that your head is full of highbrow notions; you want to go to school and be a professor, and when a lad gets such fool ideas, it's time he got took out and put to work. Did you ever see a professor in my place? No, and why? Because they can't afford to buy a glass of beer, more'n half of them, and there's

mighty few of those fellows can earn half as much as a good hammersmith or a machine-shop boss."

Olga brought in a warmed-over breakfast of steak that had dried and curled up, soggy potatoes, and a pot of coffee, then retired. Bram drew up a chair and began his meal.

"Shop work isn't my line," he said. "You know I'm not cut out for it."

"That's more nonsense. No man ever knows what he's cut out for. He thinks he sees an opening somewhere, and he goes for it and gets knocked out. Or he takes the easiest way and says it's his calling. In the ring it's the advice of the umpire that would be the best, but he never gives it. Now, I'm giving it to you."

Dartnell lighted a pipe and emitted a cloud of smoke that hung low over the dishes and made his son cough irritably. "Clerking won't do. You may be pretty good at figures, I'm not denying that, but your writing ain't fancy. A good writer knows both how to do the plain hand and also those scrolls and dovetails. And a poor doctor you'd make. I showed you how to cure birds that had the gapes. And what did you do? Pour them full of turpentine—without any oil mixed—and killed them as dead as mackerel and cost me two of the best possible champions that I hatched last year."

He lowered his voice. "I wouldn't of dreamed a bird would hold so much. A whole gill of turpentine,"

he mused plaintively. "Now, that worried me, Bram. It sure did. When a lad is eighteen, which you were last year, and educated, he ought to have some smartness. I've lived long enough to know that training and hard exercise is good for both lads and birds, and I figured you ought to be down to the Works, where you'd get both aplenty."

Bram pushed back his plate and listened, wordless. His father was forty if he was a day and was probably right sometimes, even if he was a dull sort of beast who knew nothing except the shop, grades of liquor, chronicles of the ring, and game-cocks.

"D'you hear me?"

"I'm listening, sir."

" 'Sir' be damned. You're not in school. You've been a fine gentleman long enough. You're cracked on Latin, poetry, and algebra, and hang around with a lot of fellows that can't talk of anything else. Just talkers! People that has no trade to put calluses on their hands grow soft in the brains. What a young fellow needs is to slog along with two men twice his age who can give him a kick in the behind once in a while.

"When I was your age, I was a pretty good speller myself, but my old man took me by the ear down to the Atlas and asked them to make a blacksmith out of me. Well, I dawdled along for about four years, and just before I finished my time, I thought I knew all about it and got the swelled head. I knew the hand motions, but I didn't have the attitude. There was Big

Mullarkey, who could work faster than anybody in the world, and the way he could turn and lay a white-hot flange on a Babcock boiler, which they made in those days, was the prettiest thing you'd want to see, though I couldn't appreciate it at the time, being a young fool. He came over and sat on a rivet keg and watched me for half an hour, then he looked very sad and cursed to himself and pulled up his sleeves. I knew he was coming for me, though I hadn't done anything to him, and I went at him fast. Well, we knocked over two anvils and a water-barrel before we could stand up square and fight it out. He was one of those tough, big fellows with legs like a big X. I did my best, but he rocked me for fifteen minutes, caved in my looks, and gave me an almighty fine lacing.

" 'Now,' he said, 'you've got some sense kicked into you. Learn to put all of yourself into your job, or I'll trim you some more. Kid Dartnell, you'll thank me for this some day,' he said, wiping the blood off his fists. 'But you'll never be able to pay me back.' There was tears in his eyes. 'I like you,' he said, 'and that's why I done it.'

"Then who should come along but Council Banks? He had black whiskers then, and he had been hiding behind a post and watching the fight.

" 'You're fired!' he yelled at me, mad as hornets. 'Get that, you're fired! You can't go kicking around old men in my shop like that. And there's no man was

ever any good unless he got fired out of his job once or twice. But get back to work, damn you. You're hired on again.'

"That was when my education began. And when my time had been over for six months, they made me boss of the shop, and first thing, I got Big Mullarkey a raise, ten cents an hour, which was good beer-money those days. I went into the ring, and every time I fought, there was Big Mullarkey at the ring-side to cuss me loud to hell-and-gone and get me mad, and if he had only been big enough to kick me hard, I'd 'a' been champion!

"You see, Bram, I'm letting you off easy. You've got the fog in your head, but I haven't got the heart to go beating up a son I don't know very well. I've given you a good send-off, and you've got to admit that. You're not cut out for clerking, nor for the liquor game, and as for sporting, you can't appreciate a bird main—"

"They're illegal," Bram cut in.

"Nonsense. They're encouraging to the chicken industry. Now, go where you can use what brains you've got by working with people that have got as much or less than you have. Here's a letter for you."

Dartnell pridefully shoved out a great fist with a thin letter in it.

"There, do you know who wrote that? Lem Porson—right on the bar. I figured it would be a nice little surprise for you. That's a personal introduc-

tion for you to the employment officer in the Atlas. God, I wish I had your chance and I could begin all over again!" He pulled out his watch. "Over an hour late. But let it go, it's the first day. Olga! Bring his dinner-pail here."

It appeared magically on the table, as if the Lithuanian girl had performed some legerdemain behind the door. Bram took the pail and moved to shake hands with his father, then refrained. Peter Dartnell's eyes just then had haze in them; and they were looking away as if into the past, towards a youth full of valiant struggle and magnificent bruisings, taken as well as given—a youth none the less triumphant for that the garlands of championship had not crowned it at the end. For all that, he had been the worthy champion of the Atlas in the days when that honour counted. He seemed, as he sat there, with his wide, bruiser's shoulders bowed over the table, to be living it all over again. Bram's arm dropped. The old hunker! He had not forgiven him. And he had better be going before his father again grumbled at the lateness of the hour or proffered him any more garrulous advice.

He left and stood at the curb. He had knuckled down, of course, but it solaced his ego not to be too precipitate in going to the block. He faced the wind, honed to an edge on icicles, and set out in the opposite direction, towards the school. For an hour he loitered at street corners, kicked his heels in the icy

doorway of a baker's shop, walked in and out of a half-dozen saloons for intermittent spells of warmth, and loafed about until the school bell rang, choked in the gusty wind. For two years it had summoned Bram and his mates to the opening science-class. It was their custom to lurk unseen, then race to get there before the bell ceased tolling. Bram, the fleetest of legs, was invariably the first. He now hid his pail behind him and peered out. Five youths erupted from as many doorways. They were Badger, Rohe, Keller, and little Withington. They looked curiously infantile, with their mufflers a-flutter in the wind and their laughter echoing in the vestibule as they unwound their wraps and kicked the balled snow from their feet. Then appeared in chiaroscuro the silvery and hydrocephalic head of Stanley Withers, the science professor, a puzzled and chubby Dickensian being who was always sucking peppermint drops. Then the great door closed with a bang, and that was an end to a life that thenceforth seemed to him always a dream.

He turned back, and when he had reached the gasworks, he stopped to look up at his window. Through the thawed panes he beheld an agitation of sheets and the plump Olga at her task of making the bed. Her voice had been noticeably loud in the hotel the last year, ever since Christmas, when his father had bought her a showy fur coat and an umbrella with a solid agate handle. She had made progress and had

worked up from the status of kitchen girl to a position that was influential and not at all ambiguous.

The hotel had taken a chilly and alien seeming. It was a large and dingy structure of brick, with arched windows, indigo blinds, and over the door the legend:

"Dartnell's. Schiedemann's Fine Ales and Beer on Draught. Atlas Checks Cashed."

Rody Madgett, the bartender, came out to polish the brass signs on the corner. Common saloons had one, or at the most two, but Dartnell was a cherished client of all the breweries in that part of the state, and their signs, concave and etched like shields, embossed the two pillars at the door and gave them an Oriental sumptuousness. Rosy and glowing, Madgett was impervious to cold. He was in shirt-sleeves, with snowy apron tied well up under his armpits. His sleek hair, with curls pressed flat on his low brow, his Ascot tie, and his air of importance proclaimed him what he was, a man of consequence in the gas-house district. He was Dartnell's lieutenant, for one thing. He refereed prizefights. Twice, while he was a punch-press operator at the Atlas, he had led the Labour Day parade as grand marshal. He had risen since then and had even represented the district in the paving jobberies at the City Hall, but he always spoke in a tremolo when he referred to "the boys."

To Bram, the extraordinary about Madgett was that, for all his genial dignity, he refused to let anyone else polish the signs. That was his prerogative.

Bram watched him again. Puffing at a fat cigar, Madgett dulled the signs with whiting, then rubbed them until they gleamed like mirrors. There was craft in that; a mastery of stroke, with the correct pressure and swift release. He knew the proper cloths to use, linty cloths that he could crack like whips; knew to a drop the right amount of Barkeepers' Friend that could draw out all the latent nobility of brass. It was work of hands. Madgett, in the shop, had never been a mechanic, and his respect for a first-class toolmaker was well known. Such magnificos of the trade as Diedrich, the die-setter, and the fabulous Zellner, who engraved metal stamps, were allowed to drink beer only at his own expense. Madgett had a soul, and, though frustrated at the shops—for the legend was that he had been fired for incompetence—it had developed through boundless appreciation. The job done, he regarded it fondly, and then spat into the gutter and re-entered the saloon.

Bram, feeling that he had misjudged Madgett, much as his father in his green days had misjudged Big Mullarkey, went on pensively and wound through the Italian settlement, where aromas were diversified and sheets hung frozen in the wind. He crossed the railroad tracks, reached the Works, and entered the employment office. On the benches sat a number of men who wanted to earn bread and butter. They sat motionless with their eyes fixed hypnotically on the inner door. They had come before dawn, and ap-

peared, in the process of waiting, to have acquired occult qualities, for at times they became more rigid and stared all the more intensely. This phenomenon synchronized with very faint sounds behind the door. It opened. A vinegarish little man with a fishy eye looked at them. Rather, the eye roved of its own volition and, finding nothing of interest, communicated that deprecatory fact to the brain, with the result that the mouth tightened grimly. The eye fixed itself upon an old Sicilian with circular wrinkles carved on a face of mahogany.

"Good job for you," said the officer. "Three dollars a day, double for overtime after nine o'clock. Sweeping floors in a warm room, and carrying out the shiny spittoons. Very good job these cold days. Want it?"

The Sicilian, who had been holding out supplicating paws, with cap between, reached out and pressed the officer's hands to his lips.

"Ever work here before?" the officer asked gently.

The supplicant shook his head in long negation.

"Never?" The glint in the eye changed to a yearning love-light, and the mouth relaxed. Bram's heart was suddenly warmed by the man's tender humanness. "Forgot, have you? Forgot that you worked here for seven years and that your name is Tito Carneval, and that you were kicked out last summer for stealing brass?" He jerked his thumb towards the door, and as the overwhelmed Carneval slunk out, he

focused his eye upon the two lean-jawed men in blue woollen shirts.

"This is your first time here, and it might as well be your last. I'm not running a railroad. You want something soft indoors, but you're big enough, both of you, to get jobs spooning coal on the Lackawanna. Go back to it." He spoke as if soliloquizing.

They started to glare impotently, but rose and, hat in hand, crept out. Bram wondered how the little monster knew they were railroad men. Two youths of his own age held out trembling hands with letters in them. The officer shook his head in kindliness. "Another term in the kindergarten won't hurt you. Don't come around before next year." They retired backwards, and then Bram felt the eye upon him. He held out his introduction. The eye glanced at the writing upon it.

"H'm, you know Porson, eh?" The officer read the scrawl, then, going into his office, brought out a document for Bram to sign.

"Peter Dartnell's son, h'm," he murmured as he blotted the sheet. "It seems to me I've seen you before somewhere."

"Probably at one of the cock-fights across the river," Bram suggested.

"Here are your indentures. Go through the back and right down the line to Shop Forty. Four years will pass quickly. You will be older in body; try to

be older in mind. And remember, Mr. Dartnell, a little tact—a little tact goes a long way."

Bram thought that the official could use a little to some advantage and wondered if the cock-fight observation had not evoked that advice. He went out by the back door and plunged into the drifts in the yard. He passed the main office, with a watchman in gold buttons at the entrance. Then came the laboratories, the engine and power-house vibrant with great dynamos; shop after shop, cavernous and as squat as howdahs, pouring out in warm gusts their atmospheres foul with insulating compound, vulcanized rubber, over-heated metal and oil, burning sand from the casting pits, and the acrid-sweet odour of cedar dust from the twanging band-saws in the pattern-makers' sheds. An electric flat-car, driven by a man in mangy furs like a moujik, sprang at him, and Bram jumped off the track. A hump-backed watchman came out of a kennel and barked at him and would not be appeased until he had read Bram's paper and inspected it to make sure that it was not a forgery. After that, Bram carried it in full sight, like a talisman, and trudged on, with his heart sinking at the immensity of this unknown world full of smells and unexpected perils.

Shop Forty was at the far end of the works, a new building that was the size of a cathedral and had steel tracks running into it. The door, which seemed an acre in extent, was studded with bolt-heads white

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with frost, and it forbade ingress. Bram had the presentiment that it would be unwise to enter and had half a mind to turn back when his eyes fell upon a great pendant handle, like a purgatory-hammer. It was greasy; he put his hand to it with a shudder, lifted it, and entered.

He was assailed by a deafening and broken uproar. It was a saturnalia of sound, clangorous and screaming, like the sea in a hurricane swarming with huge, disturbed animals, and he waded slowly into the sound as if it were a palpable element. The interior of the shop was churchly. Daylight strained through the glass roof high overhead, maculated with patches of soot-covered snow, and fell through girders and vast space upon a floor of glistening iron blocks. Segments of the floor, with gigantic castings bolted upon them, were revolving beneath machine-tools that rasped off the metal in squirming, blue-hot chips that, every five or six yards, broke off with loud reports and bounced angrily on the floor like cobras. Ten of these machines lined the wide aisle on both sides. Their stormy bellowings were underlaid with the rat-tat-tat of pneumatic hammers, the hiss of compressed air, the hollow roar in steam-valves, the thundering roll of overhead cranes, the clanging of chains, and the warning cries of workmen, thin, falsetto notes in the discord.

After he had stood there a quarter of an hour with dulled senses, the sound became less bewildering.

He could discriminate the voices of the machines. Each different in pitch. He watched, and each machine, horrendous as was its aspect at first, resolved itself into something amenable, if not benign, not unlike a performing mammoth, and governed with wary effort by trainers in blue overalls. He approached one trainer and inquired the way to Porson's desk. The trainer was irascible and greasy and had wool packed in his ears.

"Over to the hat-peg!" he yelled through the din, with the comment that any fool ought to know that. "'Way over there, by that pillar!"

Bram found the desk, a greasy and black box with sloping lid and four unsteady legs. The top bristled with skewered papers. Porson, in shirt-sleeves, was studying a blue-print. Bram waited till he moved, then proffered the letter. The foreman held it dubiously between thumb and forefinger, then opened and read it.

"Dartnell's kid." He scratched himself and frowned. "People has got to work in this shop," he said testily, as if he had just been contradicted on that point. "Put their mind to it and get out the work, d'you hear?"

"Yes, sir," Bram shouted at him.

"We got plenty boys in this shop. People are always sending boys here. Some are good and some are no good at all. And that kind don't stay here long. Come this way."

The way led behind one of the machines, a narrow space hung with coats and hats, impeded by wooden cabinets and lighted by a cobwebby window dark with splashed oil and sifted over with iron dust.

"I don't know what you can make of this!" Porson brayed at a heavy, flabby man in a straw hat who sat on a box under an electric globe.

"Make of what?" echoed the heavy man, who inclined an ear without looking up, and opened a tobacco pouch.

"This lad here. A new apprentice. Maybe you can learn him something. Anyway, give him a good show, Trego."

"They're all alike, I tell you," said the man, heaving up a grunt after he had stowed a wad of tobacco in his cheek. Porson was already gone. The man opened a cupboard, administered himself a draught of whisky, then removed a tray of callipers and rules that were very rusty, and gave them to Bram with a sheet of emery-cloth.

"Get them cleaned up," he said, giving his mouth a wipe with the back of his hand.

Trego, with hands clasped behind him, moved out front to watch the progress of machining and looked on with the impassive gaze of one accustomed to living in the midst of overwhelming clamour. No man could think in that clamour, but his large expanse of pallid face had a dignity that could pass for intelligence. His frame was encased in stiff new overalls,

manifestly expensive, with great brass buckles and with a sewed-in plaque at the rear, "King of the Road." He lived up to that monarchical touch. Bram sat on the edge of the box and began to scrub the rust off his master's tools. The noise was a screaming, vibrant song that set every nerve in his body tingling, and in the song were interludes of a metallic shriek, a diminuendo in bass, when a chip a yard long flew off with a percussive bark. He paused frequently in his task, then forced himself to work again. It was too late to rebel. Or too early. He did not know, for he could not think.

CHAPTER TWO

He was getting at the heart of it, more or less, and after three months the shop had become as familiar to him as the schoolroom he had left. The shop was infinitely more complex, though its complexity was not now so apparent as it had been at first; very much as the noise was less apparent, though it had not diminished in the least, despite the assertion of his nerves, which had merely grown less responsive. In short, he had got used to it. The world had been upset for him. He had by mishap poisoned his father's birds and for that had been made a sort of lackey to a numskull. That was how he had looked on Trego the first week, but now he was less sure. Trego was even admirable. He was a simple man who had attained perfectibility, for all his attributes had been developed to their uttermost limitations. He was a mechanic, and a good one. He was the door-keeper of the Vulcan Lodge of the United Machinists and discharged his duties with tact and shrewdness. Every year he won the second prize with his Irish setters at the dog-show. Each spring he sold more tickets for the Shop Forty clambake than any two other workers together. These triumphs procured him happiness. On no point was he capable of improvement, though that

may have been because of his lack of imaginativeness; but if he had imagined that he had fallen short in anything, he would have been unhappy.

Bram was again polishing tools. The confounded things were always getting rusty. It seemed as if he had done nothing else since he came into the shop and that he was doing all that was within his capacity to perform. But Trego's criticism, truculent, but good-natured, had transmuted it from a chore to a challenge, and the tools shone. That talk of his father's—the talk about workers and how they and no one else amounted to anything—had cut rather deeply. It had been like a beating; not the kicking that toughened many natures, but a beating that broke the spirit, that gave one spaniel eyes and a sense of unworthiness that would last until the end. So he thought, but in place of the old, broken values another set had been put up for him. It was one of those small incidents that turn out to be the most decisive in our lives. He had come in, the second morning, with a pair of black overalls, which he donned at once. Trego was displeased almost beyond words.

"That won't do," he said. "No real mechanic in the Atlas will have anything to do with black overalls. Wouldn't take them for a gift. Maybe there's a reason, more likely there isn't. Black overalls is a insult to mechanics. What do you suppose God made blue for? Take them back at once and get them exchanged. Get 'King of the Road.' They cost three and a half,

but mechanics has got to have them, and the buckles don't get rusty in the wash. I'd hate to have Zellner come along and make remarks about having coal-heavers around here."

Bram went out at once to get the offending garment changed, after Trego had arranged with the time-keeper for an hour's leave of absence. And, loosely swathed in a "King of the Road," like a pea in a sack, for the waist was a yard and a half in circumference, to allow for shrinkage, he stamped about loosely, to Trego's profane approbation and the satisfied nods of the other workers. Conventions were observed more rigidly in the Atlas than in the schoolroom.

Trego, with arms folded, stood on the revolving table of his machine like a commander on the deck of a battleship. The table was twenty feet in diameter, and he reappeared before Bram's vision at intervals of two or three minutes, looking impassively through wire spectacles at the tool that just above his head was gouging out chips two inches thick with the crepitation of pistol-shots.

Cullen, the bow-legged crane boss, a little fellow with a lower jaw like a beer-mug, straddled up to the machine and beckoned Trego down for confidential words.

"Old Banks got all lit up last night," he said. "I drifted into the Casino, and there he was, soused to the gills and hollering. He offered to lick anybody

in the place. He does that every time he gets swacked. He had a crush on Mag—the red-head, you know—and Jimmy, the little runt that plays the piano when he's sober, which ain't often, because she keeps him, made a pass for him, and old Banks knocked him out. It took two fellows and the coon to back Council into his old stage-coach and drag him home."

"Did, eh?" said Trego, appreciatively. "When he gets going, he don't stop half-way, not him. Old Banks, he's a terror when he gets his skin full."

"Uh-huh, and he had both feet on the dash-board of the coach and he was hollering and singing for Violet."

"Violet?" Trego frowned. "I don't know her."

"A big coloured lady just up from the South. Well, Banks sure had a good souse last night. Uh-huh, he always gets away with it. When Porson falls off the wagon, he has a run-in with the cops. I'd like to see them try to lay hands on old Banks."

They discussed for several minutes the escapades of the bosses, and the minutest details of Porson's fistic exploits at the house of somebody named Dolly, which wound up in an encounter with the police. Bram listened with interest to these disclosures. It was clear that the frailties of the two great men enhanced them in the esteem of the workers. So much the greater were these two than Simpson, the principal of the school, and Professor Withers, for the faults of the Atlas giants were being discussed by

subordinates of their own maturity and intelligence, and yet their infallibility remained unquestioned. Simpson could not be mentioned in the same breath as Council Banks. Imagine trying to question Council Banks! Bram trembled at the enormity of the thought. He would be annihilated. Even Simpson would quail before the stern eyes of the old Goth, which had a brain working behind them, inexorable and driving, like a gigantic fly-wheel. After all, Simpson, perched on text-books, was but a captain of schoolboys, less than five hundred. But Council Banks, strategist in the art of production, was lord over phalanxes of mighty machines, and dictator of ten thousand men.

Trego was now wont to put the work in charge of Bram, while he hid from view in an underground crypt for as much as an hour at a time, after giving his assistant counsel on what to do in case of unusual sounds during the machining. A dozen times Bram started up in alarm from the box and dashed to the handle of the rheostat. But it was merely the tool striking blowholes in the casting. It revolved with a continual roar of agony, like a minor world turning on its axis and being formed in the process. This casting would in time become part of another machine that would make an appalling uproar and function in the agonizing creation of something else. It was a source of wonder to Bram that the men, prime movers in this business of creation, should themselves be so quiet. Bram always watched the casting in an appre-

hension of disaster, and it was ever a relief when Trego returned.

"Everything all right, kid?" he would mumble, stowing tobacco in his cheek. "You'll be a mechanic yet, Atlas brand. Go down and have a little smoke and rest up."

Council Banks, in the interests of efficiency, had placed a ban on the combustion of tobacco in the Atlas. Painted above the check-board near the timekeeper's desk was the admonition: "Indulgence in smoking anywhere in this shop is equivalent to automatic resignation." This was supposed to have been copied from the Bible, most workers regarding it as cryptic, but somehow intimidating; and the more literate honoured it only in the breach, but guardedly. Those who stood in well with the bosses looked upon it as merely a handy pretext for the firing of those who had fallen from grace. Bram lifted the trap-door and descended. An hour previously he had seen two habitués of the crypt go down the ladder. A candle was flickering in an atmosphere of decayed oil and bilge. He was in a circular concrete well, boarded around the edge, over which lapped waves on a pool of semi-liquid consistency. In this revolved upright the shaft holding the table up above. It was a black and odoriferous region, hideous with the gnashing and grinding of gears. He rolled a cigarette. The candlelight revealed an old man with a draggly beard and an Italian floor-sweeper, both sitting at ease on a

bench padded with old coats and rags. They were oblivious to the workaday world, and with the eyes of lotus-eaters were puffing at clay pipes. The old man gave him a benevolent glance.

"Ah, I know who you are. You're Trego's boy, aren't you?"

"I suppose you'd call me that."

The lotus-eaters nodded at him approvingly. "That's what I call a good chance for a boy," affirmed the old man. "That Trego, he is a fine man to work for. I've been hauling his chips goin' on eight year. Ay, we work together hand in hand. He is a mechanic, Trego is."

"What he is!" echoed the Italian. "If I had to work for someone, I'd say: 'Give me Trego.' "

"They don't make them no better than him," quavered the greybeard. "I have saw him go up and up. I remember when he started here, years ago, when he quit the farm. He began just helpin' on the job. And now look at him. They say he makes four dollars a day.

"But it don't make any difference to him. No, sir! I says to him the other day: 'Well, how goes it, Trego?' and he says to me, just as easy and natural as if I was talkin' to you: 'O.K., Thomas, and how's yourself?' "

"He's a fine man," murmured the Italian. The two became silent and sent up from the pipes clouds of smoke, incense to the nobleness of Trego. The tobacco

was a deplorable shag, and its fumes, combined with the ratty effluvium from the pit, almost asphyxiated Bram; but he stayed on to hear and to learn, for it was only such simple and experienced men, he felt, who knew human nature and themselves.

"Yes, sir," piped Thomas above the horrid clatter of the gears, "he's a real Atlas man, if you want to know. Real American, goin' back to the Injuns and Lincoln. They's too many foreigners here. Some is all right. Look at Zellner. But there's too many foreigners here, and they hadn't ought to of let them in. Us old-timers has got to stick together. How many is workin' now that was here when I got my job with the Atlas? It had just started up. One little shop it was, with a tin roof and an enjine at one end and a smoke-stack at the other. Thirty-two year ago. I'm the only one left, except the old boss, and that's Council Banks.

"I seen Banks th' other day, and I says to him: 'Well, Council, how goes it?' and—"

The Italian grunted and knocked out his pipe. "Counseel—huh, he haven't no time to talk to you. He look every man in the eye and tell him to go to hell. And if he don't go, he kick him in. He got no use for nobody."

"He made the Atlas what she is today!" shouted the old man. "The biggest plant in Ameriky! And mebbe you're right he ain't got no use for nobody—no more than for them rats down in this pit, or for Polacks.

But he's a Atlas man, Council is. Once a Atlas man, always one, I says."

He nodded encouragingly at Bram. "There's a mark on them, and mix up a lot of men downtown, fellows from the other big plants, too, and you can pick out the Atlas men as quick as that. You're in luck to have Trego learn you. He's democratic, Trego is. He says to me only yesterday: 'Remember, Thomas, brass chips and cast-iron chips, they go separate. They don't mix, no more than whisky and lager in your stummick.' That was pretty smart, hey?"

And thus it went on, the old man lifting a finger and wailing above the clangour like a mystic on a battlefield, and Bram felt that he was being initiated into a fraternity bound together by a tie of spirit and hoops of steel and more esoteric and noble than any he had ever heard of. By what mark would men soon be able to tell that he also was of the Atlas brotherhood? He had now smoked and rested enough and he went up. A moment later, Banks strode up, with Porson at his heels.

"What's this, Trego?" he shouted. "Forty-eight hours on Casting X B and not done yet! That's way over schedule, you ought to know that. And the iron's as soft as green cheese. Why can't you get it out sooner?"

Trego took in another mouthful of tobacco, wiped his lips, and, after tying the strings of his pouch of

Mechanics' Delight and stowing it in his hip pocket, gazed thoughtfully at the casting.

"If I was boss here," he said reproachfully, as if to himself, "I'd do all my yapping at the foundry, where they make castings that's more like glass than ord'nary iron and more full of holes than a Swiss cheese, because a lot of no-account moulders throw orange-peels and egg-shells into the melted iron. And if I was boss and couldn't see that, I'd quit my job."

Banks, as rigid as a pointer, sniffed sharply, and his beard quivered with suspicion, as if each stiff hair had become electrified.

"What's this, Porson—what's this? Haven't I told you abso—lu—tely to forbid smoking in this shop? My God, the place is rampantly socialistic! You'd think Zellner was running the place. Find out who are violating the rule, and fire them at once."

The trap-door fell with a dull clap. Trego stepped backward to gesture to the culprits, but they had emerged into view.

"Very well, Mr. Banks. It's an Italian floor-sweeper and Thomas Butts, the chips-hauler, who has been with the Atlas since—"

"No names, Porson—no names," shouted Banks, turning away and thumping with his stick. "Didn't ask who they were—never asked anybody to squeal on 'em. Against my principles—and I've got some, Porson. Give them their time first thing in the morning. I caught them, not you."

The rest of colloquy was lost in the clamour of the machines as the two foremen walked away. The Italian swaggered off with cap raked defiantly over his eye, and old Thomas followed him, mumbling and picking imaginary threads off his sleeve. The quitting-whistle blew.

"Well," said Trego, wiping his face with a towel and putting on his celluloid collar, "you'll see 'em both at the Hat-peg in the morning. They wasn't either of them much good as sweepers. What got them in Dutch was not sassing back to the chief. That's the only way for a man to get along with a boss, and old Thomas has been here a long time, but he never got properly acquainted."

Bram went home accompanied by the shades of tragedy. His father and Olga had dined at the usual time, an hour earlier, and Bram had his own place in the large room where the boarders ate, and there he was more at ease. In virtue of being the landlord's son he was an exception to the unwritten law that required apprentices and the younger journeymen to dine apart from their superiors. Across from him sat Markel, foreman of the brass-foundry. He was a corpulent man, with dewlaps, a gleaming pink skull like a baby's, and a moustache creamy with beer foam. A furnace of rhetoric, stirred to full heat by any chance remark made by his neighbours, he was arguing violently with everybody about him, and his jaws dripped with perspiration. A foundryman born,

Markel had all of the foundryman's contempt for machinists; but some of the machinists were even wont to say that Markel had "a bean," which they considered extravagant praise when applied to a foundryman. He took a gulp of beer and hammered the table with the butt of his knife.

"No use, I tell you," he bellowed. "Them chemist fellows hasn't got the brains of a tomtit. And so I says to Council: 'How in hell can I give 'em good castings if the zinc oxide isn't distilled just right? Gimme some good red ores,' I says, 'and none of this damned silicate, and I'll turn out an alloy like no chemist ever dreamed of.' "

He shouted on, above the din of cutlery and talk, and disregarded, for Olga and the girls were dropping on the table platters of fried pork and onions. "But what do they shove on to us? What do we get? Bronze! Bronze instead of the old W L formula brass that God A'mighty invented special for the Atlas!"

Some machinists who were spooning out gravy made ironical comments on the outburst, and Markel turned to expostulate with them. "If I didn't know any more than the rest of you, I'd be in the machine-shop myself." Then he perceived Bram. "Where did you say you were working? What department?"

"The main shop—Porson's."

Markel snorted. "Waste of time," he affirmed loudly. "All they do there is drill wrong holes in castings, cut them up, spoil them, and Lord knows what

else. Pass that pork over, somebody. Yes, foundry-work is best for a bright lad."

Markel's clerk, who sat next to him, tittered. He was an oldish youth, with a mass of curly brown hair, and noticeable for an aroma of perfume, cheap rings, triple watch-chain, and a locket dangling from his neck. The great foremen of the Atlas were so combative and virile that only coxcombs or bloodless little creatures, as meek as mice, could exist in their immediate sphere.

"I should think, Mr. Dartnell, that clerical work might be more in your line. It takes more intelligence than shop labouring, but I suppose your father knew best what you were adapted for."

Markel was silent, for he had gorged to make up for lost time, and, pushing away his plate, he lay back in his chair with eyes glazed. An explosion of snorts checked the clerk. They came from Hasberg, a radical tool-maker who found temporary solace for social ills in the bottle, and who left his family after each spree to board at Dartnell's until his wife came to extend forgiveness and bring him home.

"Is a wage worker any better off in clerical make-up?" he demanded. "Answer me that. What is Council Banks but an economic slave like the rest of us? He can't quit any time he damn pleases and go off to Africa or to Lake Champlain for trout, or anywhere else.

"Chips-men, planer-hands, even foremen—ay, go

up to tool-makers—what are they all but wage slaves? Look at Zellner for brains. What's any foreman's gentleman that stool-pigeons for the boss alongside of a man like that? I'm asking."

Secure in the vicinity of Markel, immersed in the study of a greasy note-book full of notations on formulæ, the clerk was immune from insults. The waitresses gathered up the dishes, dropped them with the effect of heavy artillery into wheeled zinc trays, and trundled them off. The boarders left in groups, to depart for their own rooming-houses or go upstairs and change their clothes to go to the vaudeville show. Olga came in and began turning off the lights. Her eyes were heavy-lidded, and her arms, coming out of her sleeveless orange tunic, which matched her hair, were as white and smooth as velvet. She approached him.

"Well, you feel good tonight, Bram? You done a hard day's work? Petey—your father—he was saying this afternoon: 'You know, Olga, that boy of mine, the Atlas Works will make a man of him yet. It will put callus on his hands.' "

She smiled down at him, patronizingly. "Let me see your hands."

"Go away," said Bram, thrusting them into his pockets. "Go away and talk to Petey."

She stood there like a pillar, then turned out the light, but he knew that she was smiling with a dogged smile as she said almost inaudibly: "There's some

people never know their place. If I told him what you say to me, he would be sore."

"Tell him," said Bram, even more quietly, as he rose to depart for the saloon, which was the withdrawing-room of the boarders, "and be damned."

It was pay-day, the patronage that night would be heavy, and Bram secured a warm corner for himself. His father was not there and had probably gone across the river to look over his birds, the light of his life. Dartnell, rather more of a name and a tradition than a personality, came rarely into the saloon, and there were regular patrons who had never seen him. The place ran smoothly enough under the eye of his lieutenant, Rody Madgett. It was low-ceilinged, lined with wood painted a chocolate-brown, and its mahogany bar was of extreme magnificence, though the legend that it had once graced Canfield's gambling-house in Saratoga was not founded on truth. Its free lunch was renowned in the neighbouring wards, and on pay-days a large oyster was given free with each drink. Madgett would excavate a hole with red-hot flat-irons in a huge block of ice, then pour in a gallon of oysters soused with thirst-compelling Tabasco and horse-radish. And, deriving sustenance from a bottle of Worcestershire sauce, poked in mouth down, was a large cheese that had the magical property of renewing itself, for no matter how much it had been pillaged by grimy hands the night before, the next day it was resplendent and whole.

The patrons were coming in. Bram now found an hour or two in the saloon more than tolerable. Like all solitary and detached persons he preferred to listen and to watch for words that might shed a new light on the circumstances in which he was placed. Next to him was a small group of family men whose faces had become familiar to him in the shop. They were drinking and talking, and one moon-faced man in a blue cotton shirt was befuddled enough to be argumentative.

"I said to the engineer—a new man he was, not an old-timer—I says: 'That's not the way to design a by-pass valve. Gotta have a bigger exhaust. What with six pipes flowing into it, it'll choke like a puppy on an overshoe.' You see, that fellow, he was an electricity man—didn't know nothing about steam. And when a man's been working on by-pass valves as long as me and is a Atlas man, he knows his business, don't he? Get me, fellows? Then I says to him: 'Say, you . . .'"

The moon-faced man became excited and had to be quieted down by his companions. Others joined them, and they all began to argue over valves for hours. It was plain that not only was the engineering staff wrong, but it had never once been right. Yet it had always triumphed because it stood in with the main office and was, in fact, a part of the police system organized for the purpose of crushing any manifestation of human intelligence amongst the shop workers.

And then it seemed to Bram that he would have to fight for years to learn his trade, keep on fighting with somebody or other merely to hold a job, and, having learned that, fight to protect himself against white-collared foes in the main office.

"Closing-time!" Madgett called out.

"I guess I'm done for, Rody," said Bram. "It's going to be tough sledding for me down to the Works."

The bartender filled a glass of port and pushed it over. "Get that down. Everybody feels that way sometimes. A little low. Even people that owns breweries and big coal-yards. Been listening to that crowd, eh? To hear them you'd think they had the best brains in the world. But they're just a lot of poor dubs that's married to their jobs and had a few beers too many. They'll be all right in the morning, though there's none of them that can chip an oil-groove smooth in babbitt, or do fancy work with a pillow file like Diedrich or Zellner."

He poured the contents of the cash register on to the bar. "What'll you be getting?" he muttered, with the preoccupied air of one engrossed in money matters.

"Three thirty-six a week."

Madgett nodded. "Save some of it," he advised, as he untied his apron. "And don't play the ponies too often."

CHAPTER THREE

AROUND robin flitted in the morning to every machine that ranked the great aisle. By eight o'clock it had gathered on its covert flight so many signatures that when Bram carried it back to its starting-point and Trego, the page—a racing-dope sheet—was an imposing testimonial of sentiment. Then, a delegation of two, they went to the Hat-peg. Porson was scowling over a blue-print, and figures curled from the stub pencil clutched in his hairy fist.

"What is it?" he demanded over his shoulder, brusquely.

Trego scraped his throat. "There's some fellows, Hat-peg," he began with mild forbearance, "that would like to see old Tommy Butts hang to the job a while longer."

"Can't be done, you know that," said Porson, still engrossed with his figures. "Orders from above go here, same as my orders. That's why Shop Forty is the most efficient unit in the whole plant."

Trego pushed the sheet over the blue-print, with the confidence of a chess-player making an initial move. It was a stalemate. Porson kept rigid, then he lifted the sheet.

"What's that mean?"

"Just some names, Hat-peg. There's some of us fellows around here that like to think names still count. I can say no more than that, Hat-peg."

The foreman looked straight at the delegation, but his embarrassment was pitiful, and he averted his eyes, looking towards the distance, with thumbs pressed on the clutched paper until they were white.

"You know, this makes it very hard for me," he said in a strange voice. "First time I've ever relaxed on efficiency. What did he come in again for?"

"He was sort of absent-minded, Hat-peg; and there's no man can haul out hot chips for thirty years without the smoke affecting his brains."

"That's right. Well, let it go. But there's no call for Council Banks to tumble all over him everywhere he goes."

They returned to the machine, and hovering amid the coats, bolts, and paraphernalia behind it was Thomas Butts, a waif with eyes that in the night had sunk with grief. At their coming he plucked with both hands at his wisp of beard. Trego, after pushing a wad of tobacco into his mouth to overlay the emotion in his words, spoke gruffly.

"The chips is piling up everywhere, Tommy. Better drag 'em out before the fellows begin to holler. Only, when Council comes along, you don't have to trundle the wheelbarrow over his corns."

The old man removed and hung up his coat and sallied out, with hands outstretched like a swimmer

about to plunge into dangerous waters. Twice in the afternoon Council Banks was sighted, and the vision coincided with bell-like sounds, as of bars of tool-steel struck with hammers.

"That's the signal to old Thomas," said Trego. "But if Council sees him, then his goose is cooked. He never forgets. Dunno how long it will last. That was Zellner's idea about the round robin. Wrote the words himself and sent it down by an apprentice."

Trego was something of a yachtsman. He dabbled in motor-boats, and, having bought a load of seasoned oak at cost, through the aid of a friendly clerk in the pattern-shop, he had built a new boat, and Bram had helped him launch it into the stream. In fact, he had toiled with Trego for three Sundays and had given him a hand in fitting the engine, and they had made several voyages on the channel that wound through the plant, skirting all the large shops and making several loops that had to be traversed by bridges. It was a very ugly voyage by day, but when night had cloaked the hideousness of the shops, the piles of coal and cinders on the banks, and the foul patches of tar and boiler compound on the water below the power-house, it was pretty and carnival-like. It was as if they had surprised a romantic and Venetian beauty in the great smouldering heart of the Atlas. The stream was a canal that wound through a world of velvety blackness, gay with intermittent bursts of pyrotechnics from the high stacks, and now

and then lighted up with bursts of light from windows in shops where night-shifts were at work. It was symbolical of a life within a life. The two would embark under a low iron bridge at the entrance, and joined by a friend of Trego's, a lathe-hand named Haggertha, they would set out on an enchanted cruise on waters where they would meet no other craft. It was pleasant to drift in the darkness, drink bottled beer, smoke pipes, and converse on the happenings of the day, or remain silent like animals under a spell. To Bram these experiences were precious, and no talk of the schoolmen could compare in richness with the drowsy, illiterate, and meaty words of his shop companions.

There was to be a lecture in the school auditorium on airplanes. A pair of tickets had been mailed to Bram, the first intimation of the school world he had received since he had left. He invited Trego to go with him.

They met by appointment in the back room of a saloon downtown, a place littered with radical papers and spittoons and smelling of stale tobacco, for it was the secluded rendezvous of mechanics with socialistic leanings. Trego was ceremonial, alarmed at the prospect of an incursion into an academic world, and he was dressed in Sunday clothes and an ironed black shirt. They clinked glasses to the success of the evening, and that nerved him for the ordeal. Trego reassured himself all the way to the hall.

"Engines is engines, Dartnell—whether they're up in the air or bolted to the ground. A fellow might get some pointers. Pointers always comes in good."

He was loudly trustful of getting pointers, but at the doorway of the lecture-room he had to be pushed through the crowd. "Well, look who's over there," he whispered to Bram. "Zellner, and nobody else." Bram looked about, but could not discern the man in question. The audience was composed of engineers and men of the college faculty with their wives.

The lecturer was a dapper and assured gentleman in evening clothes, with a pointed beard and eyeglasses, and a pair of speakers, one of them Simpson, the principal, established him as a profund authority on airplanes, as if the audience had not taken that for granted. He plunged heavily into aerodynamics, and advanced, with stealthy humour, several hypotheses as to what might come of it all at Kittyhawk, where the Wrights were again flying. That anybody should fly need occasion no surprise. It was really perfectly simple. It was all explicable by calculus. He covered a blackboard with equations, set down the chalk, and rapped them with a pointer, urbanely, like an exorcist so knowing that he could afford to mix humour with his science. This sank the whole matter into darkest obscurity. At first Bram had sat enveloped in a glow; then, when the lecture became too abstruse, he got lost. He was depressed. He had never been much of a hand with figures, but he had forgotten

all he had learned, it seemed. Bram hoped the lecturer would do something comprehensible at once. If only he would leap into the air, describe those confounded arcs and parabolas with his body, and land either on his feet or on his skull! His thoughts wandered, as at a dull sermon, and he felt a sense of alienation. Trego sat immovable and stupefied.

The ordeal ended, and there was a general rising. The larger movement was towards the platform, where the lecturer was shaking hands with his admirers. It was as if he had done something phenomenal and had to be congratulated over it. In the group of youths, all formally jacketed, who were pushing in his direction with note-books in their hands, Bram recognized some of his former school-mates. They had probably understood what it was all about. And there was Withers, the science professor, fluttering pale excitement and pressing forward. He ran into Bram.

"Beg pardon—oh, Dartnell!" He cocked his head in schoolmasterly reproof, but that was before his eyes fell on Bram's shirt, which was black, with a white tie for relief. "Oh, at the Atlas, I suppose. How did you like the lecture? It was prodigious. You know, our class has gone quite deeply into aerodynamics this term."

Withers looked at the platform, which was getting crowded. He gave a polite cough. "Ah, I wish you good fortune in your new field of endeavour. You'll

keep up a little with your studies," he advised, with a flurried little handshake, and pushed on.

A radiance settled on the platform, a radiance from scores of faces glowing and beaming as from the triumph of being contiguous to one who had enjoyed the favour and admiration of assembled human beings. Trego regarded it blankly. Bram took him by the arm and led him out, and into a saloon, where the yachtsman sank into a chair and swore to himself in a mumble. Bram ordered whisky for him and beer for himself.

"I hope you got some pointers for your next engine job, Trego."

"You'd better go now and leave me alone. I done enough for you tonight. You know, Bram, there wasn't nobody I'd 'a' done that for, except you. Not even little Haggertha. I don't ask nothing but to be left alone. Good-night, kid."

It was after eleven when Bram reached his room. He threw his hat and coat upon the floor and looked upon his surroundings with deep disfavour. The room in which he had studied, the books on the shelf, they were vestiges of a life he had done with completely. Their familiar air had gone, and they seemed but to tolerate him. There was a rap, and his father opened the door. Bram divined that he was angry.

"Isn't the house big enough for you? As soon as I go over the river, you get to scrapping with her. Told her to be damned, did you? If there's any damn-

ing to be done around here, I want a hand in it. Don't you know enough to get along with women? I won't have it, d'you understand?"

Bram said nothing. His father was standing perplexed in the doorway and tugging at his ear. It was peace in the house for the sake of the woman, and not for his son, that he desired.

"I won't have it. You'll make up to her in the morning, d'you hear?"

They faced each other. His father gazed at him moodily and with a pleading look in his eyes.

"I will, if I'm here in the morning," said Bram.

"There's something got over you, and I don't know what it is." Then, looking at his broken knuckles, "You're getting off easy," he added. He was undetermined whether to resort to threats or supplication. Feeling that he had intimidated enough, he withdrew.

After other doors had clicked and midnight was near, Bram hauled out from under the bed a telescope bag, packed into it his clothes, one or two novels, and some trifles, and, carrying it on his shoulder, left the house. Uptown, or towards the flats down by the river? Uptown was respectability. The flats were the reverse. Unattached mankind in all cities drift by instinct to the lower elevation. He started downward, the lesser effort, and wandered along dreary streets in the warehouse district, thence to a region of livery stables, candy-factories, tenements, and cheap hotels, where derelicts sat in rows in ghastly reading-rooms

and drowsed over yellowed newspapers under branching gaseliers, chary of light. Nearer the river docks, where the wind, odorous with tarred hemp, made the arc-lamps alternately bead and flare, he found a saloon that was still open. The sleepy bartender within was mixing himself a night-cap.

"Any place to spend the night here?" There was no response. "I can pay," he added.

The bartender revived himself with the hot draught. "Right up the alleys a ways." He poked a thumb over his corner. "The Peniel Mission, it is. A kind of Salvation Army, and clean as a whistle. I sent a canal-boat captain there a month ago, and he's there yet. Captains is very particular, too. Tell them that Murphy sent you."

Bram found the place, an old store, with Biblical texts pasted on windows hung with discarded lace curtains, jangled the bell, and after a long wait was admitted by a querulous being in a flannel nightgown. He followed him down an aisle made through chairs, inscribed his name in a greasy book on the desk, paid a quarter, and was led upstairs to a cell that contained two bunks. He half undressed, stumbled over a pair of large boots, evoking oaths from some awakened sleeper, then crawled under a clammy blanket and a quilt that was as stiff as a board, and fell into a stupor that was not wholly unlike sleep.

It was still dark when he awoke. Rain was swishing

against the window, upon the zinc roof, and down the eaves. Life was stirring in the mission. The sounds were a stamping of weighted boots, a creaking of leather braces, a grunting of sleepy inmates as they lurched heavily against the flimsy partitions in the process of getting into their trousers, and a banging of doors. There was a spirit of whistling, and a cheery riser trilled an imitation of a lark. Milk-cans rattled in the alley, and hoofs clumped through rain puddles. Down the hallway someone was heating coffee over a gas-jet, then grilling a smoked bloater. The aroma overcame the prevailing fetor of dottle burning in old tobacco-pipes. Something heaved in the bunk opposite, and after a flow of curses, as mechanical as a prayer, a workman in a red singlet sat up drowsily and rubbed the white stubble on his chin.

"What kind of weather do you call this?" he shouted at Bram. "Look at that!" He pointed, and Bram blinked obediently towards the window. "Hear it? Enough to drown ducks, and here I come all the way from Rochester for the job, and the lime all wet and spoiled, and the job tied up for days and days, mebbe. And there's the old woman just got another kid. What am I to do, I'm arskin'?"

"I don't know," said Bram, feeling for his clothes. "You might buy an umbrella."

"A umbrelly!" shouted the man from Rochester, outraged at the advice. "Damn lucky if I can buy me a cup of coffee. I dunno," he went on in a modified

voice, "but you might be able to lend me the loan of a dime."

Bram gave him a coin. The man spat on it for good luck. "You an outside works man—public service job, belike?"

"Inside. Down at the Atlas."

"Atlas man, hey? You're the first I ever seen in this dump. I been tryin' to get in there for six years. I can do anythin'—cut stones, lay bricks, mix paint, do a bit of carpentry, and wipe a lead joint with the best of them, and when it comes to easin' the big tubs through the Erie Canal locks—that's my partickler line. The frozen duck in the job office said I knew too much. I'm a captain. I guess they got no use for me down to the Atlas. I knew one fellow—and a damned good canaler he was—doctor horses and everything —that tried ten years to bust through the gate, but he couldn't make it. Leastways he gave it up, and he told me he guessed it was because they had some lie-bill papers on him. When a man's got some lie-bill papers on him, he mought as well be dead."

He opened his singlet and, after more comments, profane but resigned, on the weather, lay down and began to rub his chest with liniment. He exhaled an odour of gin. Touch a match to him, and he would have gone up in smoke. In a corner were some burlap sacks, and since the owner's eyes were fixed on the ceiling, Bram took one and, going outside, threw it over his shoulders. He went into a lunchroom,

crowded with patrons, who ate standing, with the steam lifting from their shoulders, and bolted down a breakfast. Coming out, he met Thomas Butts, the sweeper, who was emerging from a saloon that enticed with the smell of hot claret. They set out together, going down the alley and into the street down which flowed the main stream that fed the Atlas with men. They walked through the rain twelve abreast, with others by the thousands ahead of them or pushing behind them. Buggies and buckboards plashed by, laden down with mechanics.

"They live out in the country," said Butts. "They's the only ones that's got any sense, and instead of loafin' around town they can raise chickens and apples. When I get tired o' workin' along with mechanics, I thing mebbe I'll go out into the country. I was raised on seven hundred and fifty acres of land in Schoharie county. Yes, sir. Seven hundred and fifty acres! They's not many can say that. But it couldn't give a good man a chance. The old Atlas—it guv me plenty. Done everything, from floor-sweeper to top chips-man of Shop Forty."

At intervals, tacking like craft into the thick of the mob, came a scattering of men with faces paler than most.

"Night-workers," commented Butts. "You can always tell 'em. I tried it goin' on three year when I did night-watch in the old days. Went the rounds with a lantern, like one of them glow-worms. It was all right

if you didn't mind takin' the chance of being tapped on the bean just because you was a night-watch.

"It's no life for a man. I never knew a watchman that was any good, least of all a night one. They are ornery, mean hounds, but they can't help it, because they were born that way, and a man that can't get along with anybody in the day-time had ought to work at night, when he can sit up and hate himself.

"But what I couldn't stand was comin' out and plowin' up against faces—thousands and thousands of faces, all goin' at you when you are tired and sloggin' home to bed. The current is against you. It wears you down like tryin' to buck a undertow. When you get home, you beat up the old woman. Most night-watches do. You read about it in the papers. They get goofy in the head. That comes of not workin' accordin' to nature.

"Mind you, a night-watch can learn something if he keeps his eyes open. There will be some good work done today in the Atlas. See them all smokin' pipes? That means they all had good breakfastses and had a good night's sleep and haven't got no katzenjammer or whisky-tongues. You don't see much smokin' the mornin' after pay-day. A watchman can tell you why they don't have pay-days in the middle of the week."

They passed through the main gate of the Atlas. To Bram it was a strange experience, for he had always entered and left by the side gate which was used by the workers that came through the gas-house dis-

trict. Against the central pillar stood the chief watchmen, like turnkeys, giving the workers a keen scrutiny as they passed through. From the windows of the gatehouse protruded more watching heads. They were all of a stamp: lean, with truculent, weathered faces, drooping moustaches, and the baleful eyes of predatory birds. Butts, looking straight ahead, marched on with conscious rectitude. The siren sent out a sonorous call, which insensibly quickened the pace of the workers like a succession of drum-beats.

"Yes, sir," confided Butts, "it's only a shopman that really gets to know life. What is Americy but one big shop? Get to know a little shop real well, and you understand the big one. If I had to do it all over again, I'd come to the Atlas and do chips right from the start. There's all kinds of chips—iron, cast, rolled hot and cold, steel, forged, cast, vanadium, nickel, and carbon. Then there's bronze, copper, and aluminum chips. Plenty kinds of chips, and there's no place to learn 'em like the old Atlas. A trained Atlas man—"

"Trained doggies—trained louses!" shouted a worker trotting by, with a snarling grin at them. "If you don't hustle, you birds, you'll get docked half an hour."

The two hurried on, reached the shop, raced through the aisle, past the piles of machinery, now being lighted up one by one, and came to the checkboard. The workers filed by and, each picking his

numbered brass check off the hook, dropped it into a box. The siren gave its final bray. The timekeeper slammed the board shut on its hinges, to open it a minute later and jot down in the book the remaining numbers and reply in jests to the protestations of the tardy.

"Oil that old alarm-clock, Mike. . . . Tough luck, Jim—there's your 'baccy money gone for the week. . . . That's your fault, O'Flaherty, if you sleep in a soft bed. . . . Late again, Schultz. That's all right; a docked horse steps livelier."

These witticisms he uttered in a dry patter without turning to look at the victims, for he knew the voices of them all. He was the buffer, the neutral insulation between the main office and the men, and was therefore greatly despised, which fact disturbed him not in the least.

Life began each morning with invariable routine. No man said much at the beginning of the day, and even the loquacious spoke only to their helpers and then only in scant words. For the first half-hour everyone whistled to himself with that vacuity that precedes full readjustment of the senses. It was at this time, while brains were still befogged with sleep, that most accidents occurred in the shop, and the older workmen moved slowly and with wariness. The first sounds, which crashed the silence at two minutes after seven, were in the tool-crib at the far corner, a wire cage wherein pimply apprentices worked over

motor-driven grindstones. Bars of tool-steel jigged up and down in broken curves and vomited sparks, while the abrasives gave out a piercing hollow scream and were deluged with ammonia water, whose pungent reek seeped into the remotest corners of the shop, as does incense in a cathedral. And peering through the wire screen, with a cold eye slanting from under a derby hat, was Lem Porson. For several minutes each day it was his custom to watch the grinding with care and appraisal. The boys came out to distribute the tools, bearing them on ends of planks, and Porson, the high-priest of efficiency, let no acolyte march on until he had examined at least a half-dozen samples, to test their proper rake, angle, lip, and cutting edge. By this time the phalanxes of mighty vertical lathes were in full cry, eating their fare of surplus stock and spitting out showers of chips, and the great shop vibrated as if the earth were trembling slightly on its axis.

There was a shout. The timekeeper stood in the middle of the aisle with hands cupped to his mouth. "Butts!" he shouted. "Thom—as Butts! Where's that fellow gone to?"

He cooed the name, echoed it, chidingly, explosively, in a dozen humorous variations. He was a short, pale, and bow-legged man with a greenish velvet waistcoat, a gold watch-chain, and a pen behind his ear. He had the air of an executioner who found a certain element of drollery in his task. The mechanics

did not take up his call and stood hushed while the timekeeper waved a blue envelope. A sympathetic bell rang out, then another. From somewhere, with his face already blackened, Thomas Butts appeared, pushing a wheelbarrow heaped with chips.

"Didn't you hear me holler?" demanded the timekeeper. "Here's a message for you, special from the main office."

Butts put on steel-framed spectacles, opened the envelope, read the lines; and his hands shook. He left the wheelbarrow where it stood and crept down the aisle and out of sight.

"That's the last of the old-timers," murmured Trego. "He got it where the chicken got the ax. He should of kept out of sight. I never saw Council come back so fast."

"He's paying for his smoke," said Bram.

"Not that. It's just that the end came to him, like it will come to all of us, some way or other. But before it comes, there's some fellows can get away with anything, and not even Council can fire them. He just can't. Don't ask me why. I don't know. There's some good men can't get an even break, and there's some bad ones that sit on top of the heap. And there's some good ones, too, that life is just a little bit afraid of—like Jeens or Zellner. Unless a man is different from most, he gets swept out like steel chips. And if he isn't, all he can do is fight and not let fellows like Porson or Banks ride on their necks."

The crime of Thomas Butts was that he was indistinguishable in the mass. Bram could not forget his drawn face, bloodless under its mask of iron dust, as he had crept out of the shop, leaving behind him his faith, his religion, to which he had ministered for thirty-two years.

To maintain oneself as an entity, that was the only salvation. Most men in the shop had a glimmering of that idea. To be thrown out was the probable fate of every one of them, but none, save the eccentrics, brooded overmuch on it. They cherished their egoism, which was a sort of gyroscope that flexibly held them to the track. Living amid machines and in a routine in which the scale and micrometer were the inexorable masters, and a false stroke of the file might mean deprivation for their families, something rebellious in their hearts made them love the perverse, the odd, and the laughter-makers who jeered at their dread gods. No two men were alike, Bram was learning to perceive; any more than two chips were exactly alike, or two game-cocks. That reminded him of a usage of his father's. Whenever one of his birds, though in all other respects a promising fowl, did not put on flourish, crow with exceptional loudness or otherwise project himself above other game-cocks, off went its head, and it got stewed with rabbits to make chicken pie for Sunday.

Life in the shop was a ceaseless stepping on the treadmill, but those whose egoism or oddity lifted

them above the rest had it somewhat the easier. There was Maguire, a crane-follower, who had a large, pensive countenance and moved solemnly with his ram's-horn hooks slung over his shoulder. He had procured esteem less for his skill than for his habit of gazing so long and with such profundity on whatever piece of metal he was planning to lift that the job, instead of being simple, took on the aspects of an engineering task of vast dimensions, and its completion filled everyone with pleasure. The timekeeper was distinguished above all other clerks by virtue of a green velvet waistcoat that was both expensive and beautiful. A certain watchman who came through every day was regarded, unique of all his stripe, as not only human, but a most excellent man. All the best stories were attributed to him. He was an enormous tub of a man, too unwieldy either to run or to engage in physical combat, but he had a laugh that was as mighty as a lion's roar. He played no favourites and borrowed a chew of tobacco with equal impartiality from the mechanics, floor-sweepers, Porson, or Council Banks.

The operators gathered in little knots to discuss the affair of Thomas Butts. Apprentices, with shocks of tow hair, smutched faces, and looks of awe, appeared from distant points to secure details for their masters, and, alarmed in this strange territory of the great vertical lathes, piped questions in timorous and fragile voices. In the midst of the black piles of ma-

chinery and shadow they looked like newly-sprung mushrooms in a demoniac and obscure forest. One had sprung up behind Trego.

"What d'you want, huh?" said Trego. "From Zellner? God, I didn't have nothing to do with it. I did my best." He wiped his hands on a ball of waste and turned irresolutely to Bram. "It's no use. Look after th' old machine awhile. I've got to go up and tell him what happened."

CHAPTER FOUR

All morning at the desk there was a continual filing to and fro of mechanics, who adjusted their spectacles, wrote something, then departed with the grave faces of men who had fulfilled their duty, as if at the polls.

"It's time for the Governor's legislature," said Trego, "and we'll go over and sign Boston's roll."

Others were before them, so they waited in line, which took several minutes, for some of the petitioners had no clerkly gifts and wrote their names with agonizing slowness and much spluttering of the pen. Porson, engaged in managing the roll of paper on the desk, was affable. He was wearing his coat, and Bram felt that the occasion, whatever it was, was formal in the extreme. Porson's hat dangled from the peg above the desk. It was a heavy wooden peg, polished by decades of use, and thrust at an angle into the concrete facing of the pillar. That pillar was old, for it had been part of the original shop of the Atlas. The hat-peg was the symbol of his office and, though immovable, had the combined qualities of a sceptre and a belaying-pin. The hats of five great foremen had hung upon it, and they were men as great in their way as Council Banks, trained by discipline and

equally fortified by intellect and character. The older mechanics held that peg in respect, and the more fanciful held that whosoever was invested with the right to use it became as much heir to the virtue of nearly four decades of the masterful as if he had been consecrated by the laying on of hands.

A remark that Porson had once made, after an early quarrel with Council Banks, had passed into history and was still repeated all over the Atlas: "If you insist, sir, I cannot do otherwise than take my hat off the peg."

Banks did not insist. The legend might have been true that he had been so greatly impressed by the finality of that remark. Thereafter, by a synecdoche approved by popular usage, the office of foreman of the great vertical lathes and its incumbent became known as the Hat-peg.

"Sign here," he said, holding out the pen.

Trego was first, and Bram wrote next, doing his name in full. Abraham Hollis Dartnell, in large and firm characters, with a scroll. The foreman studied it carefully, as if he were a handwriting expert.

"That's one of the best I've seen this year," he affirmed. "A plain and scholarly hand, light on the up curves and heavy on the down, like the proper way to drive a horse."

They returned to their machine. "That's what I call getting a gold medal," Trego marvelled, *sotto voce*. "Hat-peg knows what a finished pen job is."

"Is he running for some office?"

"Well, not yet. He's trying to get Boston out of the coop. One day the Governor will get tired and pardon him. It's Hat-peg's brother-in-law that's in for life in Dannemora. Boston Lentz he was, and a bad one. Killed his whole family with a pick, and he ought to of been hung. Hat-peg's been coming around with a petition for fifteen years."

Although Bram was an apprentice, Trego regarded him as an equal, and the praise of his lad's handwriting gave him a deep satisfaction. He had also forgiven Bram for taking him to that unfortunate lecture on airplanes, so unproductive of pointers. The man's nature was tenacious, but as sweet as brier-root.

"Old John L. is over to the show tonight," he said. "Let's go and give him a hand. I've got tickets, and Haggertha is coming with us."

At half past five the lathe-hand came down to join them, carrying a large basket and a three-pronged spear. He was apologetic.

"I thought we'd put in a little time on the boat before we go to see John L. I got some sandwiches and things that some of the fellows upstairs had left over after lunch. And I thought I'd stick a mess of fish for Zellner. We haven't caught no fish in the channel this year, and there must be plenty dace running. What d'you say, Trego?"

Trego said that nothing could have suited him better. He went out to fetch the boat while Bram and Hag-

gertha waited on the bank. In ten minutes the *Shop Boy* came chugging up from the bridge near the gate, and the two stepped into it. Trego shut off the engine in the lee of their shop, and boiled water for tea in a Primus stove, and they ate their supper, squatting cross-legged on the floor of the boat. After that, Trego threw out hooks baited with artificial frogs and from the bow cast with a dry fly. Haggertha set himself to sharpening the prongs of his spear with a file. They both questioned Bram about the science of breeding game-cocks. Though men that kept close to the shop and if the gates had not been closed, would have visited it on Sunday, just to tinker about their machines, their interests were wide, though primitive. Trego doctored gratis the complaints of the dogs and canary-birds of his fellow workers, repaired guns, and enjoyed wide renown for his skill in caponizing fowls. Haggertha—known generally as Fido, because of his resemblance to a Skye terrier—was an expert in mending fishing-rods and grafting trees. But machinery was their first and overmastering love, and the vicinity of the shop their haunt.

It darkened, and Trego lighted an acetylene lamp and directed the flame on the water, and Haggertha bent over the stern clutching his harpoon. It was not until they had drifted for half an hour and total darkness had fallen that he made his first strike. There was a loud smack, as of the flat of a cleaver striking meat, and an impaled fish wriggled on the floor slats.

"Look a' that, Trego! A red-fin, sure enough. Thought it was a yellow perch at first, but its a red-fin, with the wings pink because it's May. I wouldn't of missed this for anything! I caught one once in the canal, and I think there's some water flowing into the channel, or vicey versa. I've heard my father say that before the Atlas was built, this was an old feeder of the canal."

That was the only red-fin in the catch, for the rest, ten sizable fish, were mud-suckers. They were agreed that the mess was large enough for Zellner to give a fish dinner if he were so disposed, so the *Shop Boy* cruised down to the bridge, where it was tethered, and the three rode by street-car to the theatre, where they climbed up to the cheapest seats.

The gallery was jammed, and billows of smoke rolled over the heads of the low-pay and comfortable multitude. Bram perceived many apprentices with their girls, and they were holding horns and clackers. Far below, in the loge seats, were all of Porson's operators to a man, sitting with their wives. And in the front row was Porson himself, amidst dignitaries of equal rank, including Markel, the foreman of the brass-foundry. The opening acts were neither bad nor good. Then a woman sang a ballad illustrated with a lantern slide that depicted a homeless man sleeping on a bench under a statue of Washington. The next picture revealed a policeman coming towards him. And, being a ballad policeman, instead of striking

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the man's soles with the club, he was touched and invited him to shelter in the warm station-house. The homeless man shook his head and replied:

"What's good enough for Wa—ashington
Is good enough for me."

It was the popular song of the day. The galleryites knew it, and a thousand voices under the roof lifted in the emotional chorus. It was a golden night, weltering in sentimentality. Trego, throwing a handful of peanut-shells upon the heads downstairs and dusting off his trousers, whispered to Bram: "There's a guy back there that's got a real voice, one of them whisky tenors." Bram looked and beheld Mr. Gervase, the melancholy clerk of the Peniel Mission. Attired in the black coat with white tie familiar to the habitués of the Peniel Gospel-room, he was singing the chorus lustily, and many were the heads that turned to gaze upon him with admiration.

The curtain was held down for several minutes, to play for suspense, then rose slowly on a stage that was bare and drenched with light. The gallery stirred, braced itself in the seats, and held its breath. It listened to a long speech that wound up with: "the . . . champion of America, the champion of the world, the champion of *all* champions, John—*Ell*—Sullivan!"

The great man came on, waddling his corpulence splay-footedly to the footlights, with giant hands dan-

gling and a gold cable across his obese front. His dress suit was known to have cost a hundred dollars. Breath came to the audience and revived it from its faintness; then it was exhaled in a yell that would have alarmed angels. The orchestra played "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," fortissimo, with cataclysm on the drums and brass, and the house rose to its feet and cheered. Such children as were present were lifted high to see the old gladiator. The apprentices and their sweethearts blew horns and waved their clackers over the wilderness of tossing arms below. The champion raised a fist to conjure silence, bellowed a recitation that wound up with "heart," and, letting the fist drop on his chest with a thud that echoed in the gallery, withdrew.

"A loud one," said Haggertha, fidgety because of the wet fish-basket on his knees. "They was man in the old blacksmith shop, Trego, that could have knocked him to pieces with one hand. But you never hear of the good men in any line. It's the loud ones that makes money."

Sullivan returned with Jake Kilrain, both in ring attire. The two elderly men shuffled, skipped, and poked out their fists in a similitude of boxing.

"Hit him, Jake! Poke him in the map. Dance around him. Le' go that left—hi-yi—!"

It was Mr. Gervase. Others took up the cry, and there were shouts for Sullivan. The contagion spread all over the gallery. The Peniel clerk rotated his arm

and, clapping one hand to his mouth, sent out an Indian yell that was like the tearing of a sheet. The theatre police clambered over heads to lay the tumult. There was a sharp crack, a grunt—and Mr. Gervase toppled backward, stunned by a club wielded by an aggrieved officer.

"Kee—rist!" he gasped, after he had bent over to inspect the kill. "It's the parson. Get a hold of him, you fellows."

There were shouts of "Cossacks!" and "Shame!" Trego helped bandage the fallen man and with Bram and two of the police got him down the stairs and into a hack.

Mr. Gervase's mishap was emblazoned on the papers the next morning. "Police Quell Riot Led by Dominie," "Minister Ejected from Local Theatre," went the head-lines. The incident was analysed by the workmen as they ate their lunch that noontime. It gave them much joy. Any disaster that befell the evangelical clergy was a morsel that retained savour after weeks of mastication. The previous case had been disappointing. A month before, a junk-dealer who was also a drummer in the Salvation Army band had been accused of buying metal stolen from the Atlas, and the trial took on aspects that cheered the agnostics. The man turned out to be innocent, and went back and drummed under the banner as righteously as before. The Gervase case was more gratifying, for he was discharged from what the papers referred to

as his "benefice." And that was the end of him, though rumours were that his superior education had earned for him the post of clerk in a hand-laundry uptown.

Haggertha questioned Bram to learn if any scandals were available of the man's private life. Bram could report nothing but sordid virtue.

"Can't you do a little better than that?" said the lathe-hand, unhappily. "I got to tell it to Zellner. He wants to know. You are just beginning to stand in with him, and here you don't know anything."

Whether the unseen but omniscient Zellner was an analyst of minds, a Church-hater, or an amateur of calumnies, Bram could not learn just then. But he must have thought Bram's intelligence overrated, for he sent down to him by his ambassador a bundle of pamphlets, *The Pulpit Unmasked, A Plea for Atheism*, and bright things by Robert Blatchford. Literature of this sort circulated heavily throughout the shop. Utopia and its attainment were the prevailing religion, except among the Irish, who believed excessively in something else, and men like Trego and Haggertha, who found ecstasy in work and were content with routine.

"I think I ought to have a change, Trego," Bram said one day. It was dawning on him that he had been Trego's assistant long enough, that he was his equal in proficiency, and that apprentices were being exploited to save the wages of mechanics' helpers.

"That's so. There's nothing more I can show you here. Better talk to Hat-peg."

The next morning Bram went over to the desk and made his request.

Porson rapped testily with his pencil. "You're putting in time, aren't you? It interferes with production to have men jump to other jobs. The trouble with boys and socialists is that they are never satisfied." If he prided himself on anything it was that he could handle the refractory. "Well, if you do want a change, come this way."

Bram followed him to the side-door that gave out on the castings yard.

"How long you been with Trego now?"

"Going on ten months. I began last winter."

"Not long, but I'll give you a change."

The door opened, and they shivered. A huge slab of metal, glistening and frilled with icicles, was pushed in on a flat-car. Winter had broken in early. Two Poles manœuvred the slab under the crane. They clumped about in fur coats, worn down to the cracked hide, and looked like rheumatic bears. They were the pariahs of the shop. They were yelled at with oaths because they opened the doors wide on glacial days and brought in blasts of chill wind and the empyreuma of burnt sand from the foundry across the yard. Mechanics susceptible to colds looked upon them as hangmen. From these two even the floor-sweepers kept aloof in a superior fashion. But they

were simple, ox-like beings, with no harm in them and with China-blue eyes timid with awareness of ignominy. One of them stood rigid, like a tree, and guttural sounds came through his frozen moustache as he looked at Porson. The other Pole emitted sounds less incoherent.

"Too much ice on track. Gotta have another man."

"Here he is," said Porson. "There's you job, Dartnell. Give them a couple days."

Bram swathed himself and joined the labourers in the yard. It was a cemetery of amorphous shapes, mounds of snow plated with ice: a waste guarded by a wind that swooped like a thief and blinded them with drivings of grit. Lumps of forbidding size had to be brought in, and these they uncovered with shovels. Bram scrambled on top, waved his arms, and shouted for the craneman. The Poles also waved, but could only grunt, as if their larynxes had been worn out by years of crying against the wind. In the vastness of the yard they were like ants brandishing their antennæ. Sometimes it was a long wait, with the chill gnawing at the marrow of his bones, before the travelling crane, gaunt and formidable like Wells's Martians, rattled to the spot and lowered its hooks and chains over their heads.

All day he laboured with the Poles, pushing the car, hauling at ropes, and, when the wheels broke through the ice, sloshing in water up to the ankles. It was a blessed relief to enter the shop and thaw out

in the warmth. At five o'clock they had but one more of the heavy castings to bring in. One of the Poles went in to heat some coffee. Bram and the other, whose name was Stephen, prepared for the raising of a disk that was a foot thick and twelve feet across.

"Ee—ah! Pretty soft for you inside fellow, huh?" muttered the Pole. He hugged himself and stared enviously. "Get crane job and you have muscle like this —and hands, so." He held up arms that were like gnarled branches of trees. "Now, all ready!"

A funnel of light descended from the crane on their heads and made a column in the darkness. The chains lowered with a powdering of snow, and after adjusting the cant-hooks, they stepped back. Stephen gave the signal to hoist, then hurriedly pressed the hooks that were sliding along the edge, thick with black ice. The shout of the craneman was like the cry of a bird of ill omen. The Pole was jammed against a wall of engine-frames, with the disk sunk deeply into his broken chest. His hands, pushed up against the weight, looked as tiny and helpless as the paws of a dead squirrel. The smile in his China-blue eyes was fixed and seraphic.

"That's the second time it's happened this year," said the craneman irritably, after he had clambered to the ground. "Must think they are playing tiddledy-winks."

They went in to report the fatality, and men poured into the yard. Later they began to return; Porson and

Council Banks were the last. The craneman expostulated before them. The other Pole, mute, and clutching a bottle of warm coffee, pointed a stiff arm at Bram in accusation.

"That's the man who was helping him when it happened," said Porson.

" 'Man'!" bellowed the Goth. "What I want to know is, who in hell put that kid to work outside?"

There was more argument, in the middle of a crowd. Someone said that an inquiry would be held in the morning. Six men lurched through them with a laden stretcher, the pungency of chloroform trailing in their wake.

Bram went out accompanied by Trego and Haggertha. There was a chance that he might be questioned on the accident if he went into any of the workmen's restaurants he was accustomed to frequent. The three climbed into a lunch wagon near the park, a resort of newsboys and conductors.

"Hamburger, fried spuds, apricot pie, 'n' coffee," said a voice that was Haggertha's. "Coffee for the kid."

"Make him sit right down there," said the firm and elderly Jewess who owned the joint. She was known for her resolute way with drunken patrons. "There you are, pour that down him."

They ate and talked, but the voices of the car-conductors in loud argument rose above the crash and jingle of dishes.

"I was talking to a fare that seen the whole thing when it happened," said one with insistence. "Cut him in two like a turnip, he says."

Bram was about to leave at once, but Trego elbowed his ribs. "No use to take it that way. A Polack don't amount to any more than a chip—nor did Tommy Butts—nor does anybody else. Everybody'll forget about it at the end of the week. So long as the Atlas keeps going, everything's all right. Isn't that so, Fido?"

After the meal they went into a nickelodeon where a piano with snarled inwards jangled an accompaniment to a film in which people were getting chased and knocked down by planks. It made him dizzy, and he left to walk alone to the Peniel Mission. In his room he read *Anna Karenina*, and read on despite the vision of the Pole with the seraphic eyes that obtruded on the page, but when the odour of chloroform seeped in, he hurled the book away and put out the light.

CHAPTER FIVE

EACH time he sat up in terror, he beheld a pair of eyes glowering in reproach. It was less a phantasm than an intense presence. He dispelled it by the device of keeping a candle burning. There came a knock at the door, repeated twice. He sprang out of bed to yield himself to the police. But it was only the old tailor, who lived in the next room, who was sweeping out the hallway. Mr. Morah apparently never slept; he stitched all night, and he relaxed his muscles by plying the broom as the voluntary janitor. Bram stared at him. Under the yellow glim of a wretched globe the Russian Jew, with his statuesque head and full white beard, and his arms plying in exercise, had a resemblance to Charon on the shadowy Styx.

"Did I wake you up? Sorry, my boy, sorry. Try again. It's only five o'clock."

He could sleep no more, so after dressing he went out, bought a paper, and walked under the morning starlight to the lunch wagon. The proprietress served him with cocoa and doughnuts. He did not opened the paper until he had finished his prolonged repast. The item he found after a long hunt, in the back, lost amid the advertisements.

"Fatal Negligence," it was headed. Stephen something-or-other; the name was a stretch of illogical consonants. A widower, leaving four children. "Illiterate, and having wrongly understood the warnings of the foreman, Lemuel F. Porson, the man was himself to blame, though a fellow labourer, one Abraham Dartnell, who narrowly escaped death, was also open to censure, officials stated yesterday."

"Fellow labourer." That ticketed him, set him irrevocably in his place. It was in black and white for everybody to read. You got thrown into the world; it was impersonal and wise, and after rapping you on the kunckles, it put you under the proper category, and its decision was confirmed in print. What could he expect? The inhabitants of the world he had left had forgotten his existence.

At the gate of the Atlas a man in a fur coat grasped his arm. It was his father, who said: "Did you see what was in the paper? Making the son of Peter Dartnell to be no better than a labourer, a Polack. Haven't you got any sense of respect?" He looked sternly at him and relighted a stub of cigar. "And now you get into a scrape, damn near killing a fellow, and you get people talking about you."

"You threw me into it, and you forget it is not the same as a schoolroom."

"I didn't ask whether you liked it or not. It's the right place for you. But there's a way of going about things. Porson was up last night. Sometimes I ask

him—he comes up often—'How's that boy of mine coming along?' and he says: 'He's coming along all right.' But last night he said there wasn't much he could do with you."

"He has managed no worse than you have. He put me to haul in castings with the Polacks."

"Well, fight him, then. And he says you're hanging around with that Socialist crowd. You ought to have more sense than that. The foremen are all Democrats. Better come up once in a while. You've kept away a whole year. There's a room you can have at any time."

"I'm all right. I am not asking for anything."

The rest of the colluquy was no more satisfactory to either of them. Bram went through the gate. They had shaken hands stiffly, but he knew that his father was watching him until he disappeared. They had never hit it off well together. All that had brought his father down was pique. Bram had himself enough false pride to enable him to understand that.

Council Banks, accompanied by a policeman and early clerks from the main office, came through the shop and, after looking at the spot where the Pole was killed, held a meeting at the hat-peg. A brisk clerk asked questions and wrote alternately on a yellow and a blue pad, filling out the documents in triplicate. It took an hour and exacted six signatures from each man. That disposed of the matter, and the meeting ended, to Porson's relief. The general impression

was that his efficiency hadn't shown up well. Bram divined that Porson held him responsible for it.

The influence of Porson was extending. By virtue of seniority he was ranking foreman of the shop, and the force of the Hat-peg was felt in every department. His system of efficiency, with its tool-grinding charts, diagrams of material supply, and time-limits in machining, and his elaborate table of allowances for under- and over-size in bore and shaft, which had been done into a vade-mecum for inspectors in the Atlas, made him a figure of renown throughout the plant. What earned him in this shop a lively hatred was that he had established fines for spoiling work. Mechanics had to report their mishaps to the foremen, who weighed the ruined parts on scales, deduced salvage-value, added time-cost, and imposed the fine. Chips-men became a secret police that searched for spoiled parts. Painful little episodes occurred. This made the foremen very unhappy. Hitherto genial sources whereat they were wont to borrow money until pay-day dried up, and such foremen as owned houses found themselves without tenants. The *Monthly Worker*, a surreptitious local paper, referred to Porson as "the agent provocateur," and the workmen agreed with it, though they did not know what it meant. Porson's talent might have led him to obscurity in the main office, where statistics were compiled, but his distrust of pure theory, his loud voice

and two fists made him instead a giant in the world of the shops.

"There's been the Old Nick around here," said Trego with a note of grievance when Bram returned. "Zellner sent Gran'pa Scoble to fetch me up—as if it was my fault. And the eye-doctor was around. He was knocking. He read your name in the paper. You'll have to go and see him this noontime—over to the big lathe. Mungo Jeens—he stands in with the big guys."

He groaned, for he was finding life complicated. To Bram there seemed no way of dodging trouble, not even if he was circumspect in minding his own business. When the noon whistle blew, he went to the end of the shop. The lathe, a dinosaur in bulk, was in a cleared place, with arc-lights suspended over it. At the head of the machine was an intricacy of gears and handles and push-buttons, like the stops of an organ, and another set higher up, attained by a runway with brass railings. He felt that the operator of such a machine must be a thaumaturgist of sorts. Open cabinets, revealing trays of polished instruments, and racks of tools, hundreds of them, stretched into an alcove, and here, sitting on boxes and eating their lunch, were five or six elderly mechanics. One was reading from a book opened on his lap. Bram sat on the outskirts and listened. He might have been in a crypt and assisting at a ritual.

He felt that he had stumbled into the inner life

of the Atlas, another aspect of which he had glimpsed in his night voyagings with Trego and Haggertha in the channel. The reader wore a long coat of black alpaca, tied with a leathern belt; he had a reddish-grey beard, which, with his serene countenance, which bespoke a shining probity, and his smooth forehead, the higher for baldness, gave him the appearance of an apostle or a provincial.

Tacked on the alcove wall nearer the lathe were yellowed photographs, which bore inscriptions. Bram looked at them in the beating light of the arc-lamp. They were not of the commonalty, but reverend heads with side-beards and bowler hats, and few of them could now have been alive, though Bram recognized a photograph of Council Banks, taken in his youth. There were old men with the hard faces of generals, gifted from the cradle with will and force; men of bright genius who had been engineers; foremen whose names were still spoken with respect. They were of the first hierarchy, and their tradition still prevailed. In the middle was a picture signed: "From 'Atlas' Mowrey to his friend Mungo Jeens"; it was of an aged man sitting in a garden, with chin resting on a staff. It was a Mowrey that founded the Atlas, in the seventies. Below that was a photograph of the original Atlas, a pile of dark brick; with a large group of workmen in its shadow, it was like a shepherd brooding over his flock of dependents. Its neophytes were the respected older generation of mechanics of the

present day. The Atlas had its hard, withering side; and, again, it had its dignity and accumulation of legends upon which the imagination could feed, and which nourished a sentiment that was as profound as religion. Men who left the Atlas to go to other plants were as those who had left the consolations of an ancient religion for the blandishments of upstart sects. To belittle or to dispraise the Atlas was like belittling oneself or casting opprobrium on the efforts of the ablest of one's fellow men.

Most of the names were strange to Bram. That meant little, for their greatness was inherent, and greatness, he felt, was not even remotely connected with fame.

The reader shut his book. All, except Jeens, who was exempt from the formality, departed to drop their checks. Bram approached him.

"I got your message. My name is Dartnell."

"What's this about negligence? What happened in the yard?"

Bram recounted the story. The man looked at him with hard brown eyes that became luminous in the process of appraisal. They reminded him of the bang and flash of Röntgen rays.

"Then, why the—"

The whistle blew. A helper with a withered arm and a paper cap set the machine going, then climbed to the runway as if he were a sort of navigating officer. Jeens looked up at him.

"Bring another box here for tomorrow noon, Otto." Then, to Bram: "You can eat your luncheon here, and listen. Some of the men have been coming here for fifteen years. Now we'll go down the line."

They marched down the shop together, and faces turned towards them, as if to discern more light on the affair of the Pole. Porson, hurrying up with papers in his hand, came to them.

"Those double-O wheels for the Kansas job—they're going through, aren't they, Mungo? Not that there's any particular rush," he added, with a deprecatory sweep of the papers, "but the sooner they go over to the assembly gang, the better, eh, Mungo?" His air was ingratiating.

"They'll be done when I get through with them," said Jeens. "What's all this ghost story in the paper? Wasn't the lad here exonerated?"

"Yes, officially."

"Then it could be made more clear, I think. Will you see to that? And I believe it is irregular to send craft apprentices outside to dig up castings. The yard labourers are organized."

They went on and approached Trego, who, in abasement of spirits, was stroking his head behind the machine. He was anticipating something unpleasant. It materialized in the shape of Jeens and in much the same speech that had been directed at Porson.

"That's all, Dartnell," Jeens said after Trego had retired. "All that is asked of you is an honest day's

work at the tasks stipulated in your indentures. That is the due of the Atlas. Learn all you can. That is to the interest of nobody but yourself."

"Yes, sir."

"Ay. What did I say?"

Bram repeated the admonitions. And after telling him to be at the lathe the next day, Jeens strode off, with a flapping of his apostolic skirts. Trego emerged in a state of abjectness.

"I told you something would come of it," he said. "And that's not going to be the end, neither. He's a Christ—that's what he is. But I don't want to see him around here too much. He lined me out this morning about letting you work with them Polacks. He gave it to me hotter than Zellner did. I guess you'll be seeing Zellner next."

Thenceforth, instead of treating him merely as an equal, Trego regarded him with deference. Bram listened in at the reading the next day. The book was *Sartor Resartus*. The group of listeners was the same. Other workmen came to the big lathe only to avail themselves of Jeens's skill in removing chips from the eye. Every shop had its eye-doctor, but the dextrousness of Jeens was incomparable. It was not true that he had saved a peck of eyes given up by oculists in the town, nor that he had performed several operations for cataract, though the mechanics believed all this and more. Even Banks, rich enough to have the most expensive oculist in New York brought up to

him, never lost a minute in hurrying over to Jeens whenever he had a cinder in his eye. One flick of a small pearl-handled knife, and the offender was out. His other appurtenances were a pair of magnets and a phial of morphine, which was kept filled by penny subscriptions from a group thus privileged by custom, the crane-followers.

The second day, Bram spoke to him about the tedium of his work.

Jeens nodded. "That's being arranged for—a change for you. You've had enough of big machine-tool practice, and now for work of hands. I will take you to Zellner tomorrow."

Trego was further impressed at the news. "He can do it," he said. "There'll be no come-back from Hatpeg. Porson was an apprentice when Jeens was superintendent of the Atlas and had the job before Council. Those were the good days. Jeens gave it up because he felt he had no call to boss anybody. He's satisfied. He's got an old junk-heap with a thirty-foot swing, and a nest of gears that makes more noise than a rolling-mill."

The next afternoon Jeens led Bram upstairs to the main gallery. It was a thousand feet long, with ranks of machines in unbroken rows, each with belt polished by friction with the pulley above. The spectacle was like a storm of slanting hail. They walked to the far end, a place of benches and laboratory tools, and behind a low wooden partition. The floor was swept and

oiled; potted geraniums were in the window; the seven or eight mechanics in the enclosure wore light-coloured dusters, and one had rimless eye-glasses with a gold chain that hooked behind the ear. Bram was not certain that Jeens did not look alien in these fastidious surroundings.

They went up to a personage mounted on a stool. He wore loose trousers and slippers, and his enormous paunch was enclosed in a blue, polka-dotted shirt, heavy with grease. A brass-bound tool-box glittered like a reliquary before him; his array of tools shone with wonderful brightness, and so did the cannon-ball vice on a leather pad. With a glass screwed into his eye he was engaged in engraving a bit of metal.

"Fritz, here's a young fellow I want you to meet."

The engraver made noncommittal sounds. "You're always bringing somebody here," he grunted, without looking up. "Half of them won't subscribe."

"Comrade Fritz Zellner—Abraham Dartnell."

The engraver thrust a pinch of black Hungary snuff into his nostrils, then nodded civilly at Bram. He was splendidly porcine; his head was bald, a truncated cone with glossy planes, and his eyebrows were scant and looked like question-marks. He looked at Jeens with vague inquiry.

"The lad you were speaking of yesterday? I remember now. And he saw the dominie get beaten up. I never did get the low-down on that parson, Jeens.

The best we could do was to find out that he did visit a coloured house down by the river a couple of times. I guess he wasn't much of a parson after all. That case did fizz out to nothing."

"Dartnell has been working down on the big machines, Fritz. And he wants to do some fine work."

The engraver shook his head, as if to disengage his attention from the parson.

"Fine work, you say? Ach! All work is fine. What you mean is fancy work, eh? They all want to do it. Fancy work has ruined plenty of good boys, Jeens. You know that. They put on airs, linen collars, and pinafores, and they're done for. These fellows here were all right when they came. But now I couldn't find a class-conscious man in this sty if I looked all day—not even with this glass. But all right, Mungo. I'll do it for you. Bring him up tomorrow. And—wait a minute."

He reached for a packet behind the tool-box and, removing a thick rye-bread sandwich filled with onions, smoothed out the wrapper, which he gave to Bram.

"The *Monthly Worker*. When read and inwardly digested, pass it along."

He turned to resume his work.

"There's brains on top of all that lard," said Jeens as they went down. "He may be bull-headed, too, but he has a sense of prevailing injustice. Don't call him 'the boss.' He can stand some things, but not that,

though he does run that fine-tool department. Take him the right way and you'll like him. He runs a little print-shop in his home and gets out that sheet. It's direct-action stuff. I'm a Socialist myself, but I can't stomach that; but every man has a right to think as he pleases."

Zellner had struck Bram as intimidating and swinish, but he might improve on acquaintance, as Trego did and a few others on the main floor. In the morning another summons came from the Hat-peg.

"I hear," said Porson, hanging up his hat and stroking his nose meditatively, "that you are not satisfied."

"I made no complaint again, Mr. Porson."

"Well, a man is either satisfied here or he isn't satisfied. You're not, and you've got Jeens working for you."

Bram was not sure whether that called for a reply or not, so he kept silent. Porson drummed wearily on the desk top, as if he had given up trying to make himself understood.

"Yes, Mungo Jeens, and Zellner, too. There's a lot of Socialists here. They've got no sense, upsetting things around here with their committees, complaints, and ideas. Not that I'm saying anything against Jeens. I'm not. He was born that way and is different from the rest of you fellows.

"Socialists—pah! 'Stand together, workingmen!' Hey? Much standing together they like to do! Hell,

workingmen won't even eat together. Do you ever see the lathe-hands upstairs run around with the guys that run the planers? Not them! Those bench-hands that do the fancy work on the valves, you never see them chumming with the drill-press gang. As for the tool-makers, why they won't even pack a dinner-pail. A lunch isn't good enough for them. They eat luncheon—go out for it—and half of them drink tea. The elevator men won't play cards with the floor-sweepers, and the floor-sweepers are such nice gentlemen that they won't chin at noon-hour with the chips-men that wear oilskin aprons. Why, you'd think they were Unitarians and went to church regular. As for those birds in Zellner's gang—if Banks gives them another raise, I expect to see them come in one fine morning with silk hats and canes.

"I hate to think of it, but I surmise that some day the Atlas will go to hell because there won't be any more rough-necks. It's a God-awful prospect. I hope I shall be dead then. I don't feel very well now."

Porson snorted and hit the desk. "Half the socialists here won't call themselves what they are because they are afraid of the word 'capitalist.' There's Coughlan. He's got a farm 'way out in the country, and a yard full of chickens. But he's afraid to quit the shop and work it. He stays here to take wages and holler at the capitalists that gives it to him. Cullen is another. Runs a little grocery-shop, he does; or makes the wife run it for him, weighing sugar, filling kerosene-cans,

and handing out soap all day, then cook for him at night, while he yells about wage-slaves. Say, what do these fellows think socialism is?"

"I haven't asked them."

Porson glared at him. "Well, I've told you. When I was an apprentice, I got a hiding for being only half as smart. That's what you need. And more of that home influence. Better go and see the old man. He was asking about you last night."

"Is that all, Mr. Porson?"

"No. Tomorrow you go up and work for Zellner." He raised the top of the desk and drew out a roll of paper. "And while you're here, you can put your name down for Boston."

CHAPTER SIX

In Zellner's enclosure were made all the gages, milling fixtures, jigs, and special tools required in the shop. When orders were lacking, the men did jobs that properly belonged to the coarser world the other side of the partition. Being an apprentice and comparatively mute, as were all apprentices in the vicinity of masters, Bram got on with all the hands. One or two new journeymen came, tinkered for a day or so, then went. No new-comer was welcomed by the tool-makers. If a new man did well, his progress was resented, and their dislike of him made obvious in many little ways. They watched him out of the corner of their eyes. They wormed out of the timekeeper the secret of his hourly wage. If mishap overtook him, if he got discharged or quit in disgust, it was cause for self-congratulation. This was always the manner of superior workmen.

Schlemmer, for example, a youngish and droll Finn; Plotz, a small and timorous Bavarian, with a little moustache *en croc* and a jaunty black cap; and Mullen, a limping Irishman with a grey pompadour —these were able men, who had no cause to fear rivalry. Yet, although pleasant fellows, who moved along without friction among their mates, their atti-

tude to new-comers was one of hostility, veiled by unnatural politeness. As for Zellner, he disregarded everyone and gave out orders as seldom as possible, as if he felt that advice, to a workman of competence and initiative, were an insult.

Bram was given steel blocks to file. They were two inches long, milled rough, with edges to be removed and surfaces to be slightly hollowed. There were four large barrels of blocks, drenched with fish-oil; enough, he thought, to keep the world supplied. At his right was the vice of Gran'pa Scoble. He was a nonagenarian, whose face, instead of wrinkling like a russet apple, was as smooth as if it had been carved out of pinkish-white soap. On his cheeks were tufts of whisker, like cotton-wool. Senile and extremely deaf, he was led to his bench every morning by his son, an elderly blacksmith. Bram soon got on nodding terms with the blacksmith, a pleasant man with a harassed countenance, who took him into his confidence.

"Sort o' keep an eye on the gaffer, if you can," he whispered. "I've got seven kids at home that's got to be fed up and edicated. And the gaffer's got to help out—'cause if it hadn't been for him, there wouldn't have been no me. He was a hellion at the machinist game in his day. He was the first man Old Mowrey hired for a bench-hand."

The remains of the hellion would approach his vice in a palsied totter, put on his apron, and then

hang over his neck a cord with a file tied to each end. All that was left of his intelligence was in his hands, which were as bony as a bird's claws, cunning and indefatigable. He filed with mouth open and a fixed stare in his wintry blue eyes. Sometimes, when his mind wandered back through decades to the glorious regime of Mowrey, a hand relaxed its grip, and the file dropped, to be pulled up again by its string.

To the left of Bram was Pop Hecksher, a portly little man of seventy-two, with a stubby beard, pince-nez, and a snowy apron tied neatly across his stomach. He would often rap on the vice with his file with a loud tick-tick, like a woodpecker. Ostensibly it was to knock off the chips, but in reality to attract attention to himself. He was notoriously the best filer in the shop and the fastest. He chipped to the hair, allowing himself but three of four thousandths of an inch to file and fit to the gauge. He was thoroughly disliked for two reasons: he was conceited, and he was an Englishman. That is, he gave himself out to be an Englishman, used British expressions, referred to Gladstone and Chamberlain, and made bitter remarks against America, but he was really born in Atlas City, though his mother was a native of England, and his father undoubtedly German.

Hecksher sometimes watched Bram with amused disesteem.

"My word, what's filing coming to these days?" he would shout. "Be sure it's your calling before you

fool away any more time at it." Then, with a harsh laugh in the direction of Gran'pa Scoble: "Look at that, boy. In my day they used to bury a cadaver. Now they galvanize it and make it earn a penny. Ha!

"The old gentleman ought to be taking the sunshine in front of a pub and drinking his pint of 'arf-and-'arf. All I hope is you'll be half as good a filer if you live twice as long as him. They say you are a Socialist. Well, I never knew one that mounted to a hill of beans."

He would give his file a stiff flourish above his head, as if to applaud his opinions, and then bend to his work. He and Gran'pa Scoble filed the four oblong slots in the valve bushings, a job that called for the utmost nicety and a "push fit" with the gauge. Ignored by the others in the gang, they lived an existence wholly apart. A puerile enmity obtained between the two. Gran'pa Scoble would give some fancied umbrage to Hecksher, who then uttered shrill and long-continued protests, like an outraged canary, while his senior stood rigid, with the immovable smile of a wax figure. These storms Zellner had to quell by rapping the bench for order.

Jeens came up to see what progress Bram was making. He examined a block as if it were a gem.

"Steady does it," he said. "Don't strike the edges, and try to file hollow, so you'll file straight. Keep it up long enough and you'll learn, and you'll never forget as long as you live. While you're learning, you

can't think of anything else. After you've learned, you don't have to think at all."

"That's the trouble, Mr. Jeens."

"Nonsense. Think what a comfort it will be when you are eighty. Look at Hecksher and Old Man Scoble. What keeps them alive? Filing! Nothing is more conducive to happiness than the performance of a simple routine task that absorbs for the time being the interest of both the brain and the hands. Schiller said that. I don't know why he dragged in brains. Another month and you'll get the hang of the job."

He strode away with a swish of his black skirts. Bram turned to watch him going down the aisle, a man completely the master of his environment and rewarded, therefore, by assurance, power, and happiness: a fine and heartening figure, nodded to by all the foremen.

That night, as Bram was putting away his tools, Zellner beckoned to him to remain. When all the other men had gone, he came over to his vice, clamped a block, and took up a file.

"I don't know what Jeens means by coming up so often," he grumbled. "We can show you enough without him horning in."

He began to work, and Bram watched him. In the silence of the now vacant shop the steady rasp sounded like the tickling of a metronome. There was in the engraver's extreme skill something that made him despair ever of attaining: the loose, powerful grip

on the handle; the light and guiding pressure on the other end; the thrust that gouged out a pinch of metal at a time; the swift and precise recoil; and the co-ordination of the muscles of wrist, arm, and back. Zellner was revealing a trick of the craft for Bram's eyes alone, and he had chosen, through motives of delicacy, a moment when no others were about.

"There," he said, after he had finished four blocks. "Any damn fool can show how it's done without spouting Schiller. Next time, tell him I said so. Goodnight."

Not for weeks after did Bram hear him make a longer speech than that. The man had brains. Porson, Jeens, Trego, and other men of character entertained the highest possible respect for him, and his own men regarded him with that mixture of familiar affection and awe that savages proffer to an idol. He had a double-track mind, for not only was he a foreman, *de facto,* but he also plied a craft that was an art. Humped on a stool, and peering through a magnifying-glass, he tap-tapped with a minute hammer, pushed tiny files, and carved out figures and letters. He created beauty with hair-lines and serifs. An O that he had cut three years before, Banks carried about with him in his vest-pocket to delight himself with its inspection, as if it were a cameo. A soul dwelt in that swinish body, hemmed about by uproars and distraction. That mind exuded a beauty in self-imposed aloofness. Bram thought that the kind of

work a man did might have more influence on him than environment.

He thought of the types he had met in his father's place on pay-nights: riveters, coal-heavers, boxing-instructors in clubs, moulders, draymen, bricklayers, and so on, whose work required the maximum of physical exertion. At the end of the day they could talk as copiously as they could pour down their beer, but they were too fatigued to think. Their thinking was done for them—if they were organized at all—by men whom they had hired to sit all day in an office.

This idea had settled in Bram's head, and he told Zellner about it one noontime when they were drinking beer in a saloon outside the gate.

"That comes of hanging around Mungo Jeens," said Zellner in disgust. "He hasn't thought for twenty years, and his brain-pores are closed. Workingmen are workingmen, and there's no difference among them, only some are bigger fools than others. Catch me, catch any man with sense, sitting around him when he can drink beer and listen to the original yawps of the shop lads. You think being sedentary is good for the brains, do you? All right, find me some brains in all those Strassburg geese sitting on boxes while Mungo stuffs them full of windy stuff and mysticism. That man can't think!"

"Well, if he doesn't think, he broods, sitting still for hours, looking at wheels go round, and the noise

besieging his head so that the thoughts stay in and ferment. Only the sedentary trades produce thinkers. Cigar-makers like old Sam Gompers, that talked in the park last week. Tailors like Place. Scotch weavers in Dumfries. Cloak-and-suit workers, who sit cross-legged and are the best thinkers of them all, though that may be because they are Jews. You sit on a padded stool and use a file no bigger than a tooth-pick. You make punches to punch letters, and the letters are no bigger than a pea. But suppose you were a boiler-maker and had to swing a twenty-pound sledge all day—"

"If I did, I wouldn't be so fat as I am now, and I could think better. How old did you say you were? Going on twenty? Good God, and you still believe in Mungo Jeens! Better pay for the beer today. You owe it to me for listening to your nonsense. In the morning I'll bring you some books."

For that matter, Zellner was always bringing him books and papers, which, having been carried in the pocket of his old overcoat with his lunch, reeked of onions and caraway and smoked fish.

The next morning the enclosure was unsettled, for millwrights with block and chains hauled in a new machine. It took them until close to noon the next day to finish adjusting it.

"Latest model of miller," said the boss. "Dartnell, give the boys a lift when they are ready."

Schlemmer and Plotz lugged from their benches the

fittings they had made: a revolving vice with dial and tail-piece. They were heavy, but they dropped into place on the steel table with precise clicks. Bram pushed into the slots to secure them bright, snubby bolts, hand-finished, that tightened with one movement of the wrist.

"She been a long time comin', Plotz," said the Finn. "But here she is." He stroked the machine lovingly, as if it were a beautiful animal.

Bram was not sure that they were not jealous of his attention to it. For two months they had been working on these parts, and now the task was over, and they were to be deprived of their care. The vice was handsome, polished with emery and oil to the rich sombreness of old silver, and the sunken, round-headed screws had been blued on a white-hot shovel. They stroked, patted, and touched without ceasing the convexities and smooth faces of the metal. Then they stood with hypnotic gaze, their hands wiping themselves mechanically with a ball of waste, as if by reflex action, and their jaws working on tobacco.

"Plotz, there she is," said the Finn. "Old iron girl —she's ready to eat."

The Bavarian, with head bent back, twisted his little moustache, reluctant to utter his verdict; then he noded a prideful affirmative at Bram. Hecksher, annoyed by their presence right behind him, was in bad humour and had been shrilling for hours at Gran'pa Scoble. Twice he had prodded Bram in the back vici-

ously with the ball of the file handle. Zellner had not rapped the bench once in reproof that day.

Porson came up and with Zellner and the rest of the gang looked on while Schlemmer locked in the jaws of the vice a valve bushing. Hecksher turned to stare. Plotz fitted in a spiral cutter and set the machine going. The cutter whirred through the tough steel. Four times it screamed in a monotone. In fifteen minutes the bushing was done, and the slots machined accurately to the gauge. The job would have taken the filers all day.

"Ought to be done in twelve," said Porson, shutting his watch. "Dartnell, that'll be your job. Give you piece-work on it." He frowned and went over to the bench, and thrust his hands into his pockets.

With an air of perplexity he shouted into Gran'pa Scoble's ear: "I dunno, Eli, what more you can do around her. You done pretty good work on them bushings for twenty years, you and Hecksher, and it's too bad you'll have to go. Better take it easy on the front porch. Try and raise some rabbits. Sorry, Hecksher, but I can't do anything."

Gran'pa Scoble leaned stiffly against the vice, like a stiff effigy that had been tipped over. The Englishman had already taken off his apron and stowed his files. He put on his hat and coat, faced about, flourished a salute at the machine with his stick, gave his vice a farewell rap, and marched off jauntily. The blacksmith son, apprised by a message from Zellner,

came in and, carrying his father's tools, led him away by the sleeve.

"That'll cost you three votes, Hat-peg," Zellner remarked.

And at quitting-time he said good-humouredly to Bram: "There you are, boy. That's the triumph of the ash-can. Two old soldiers that's had their day. There's not many that can see their time coming, though I do the best I can. In two days the timekeeper will be around to take your quarter to buy some wreaths."

He was over-pessimistic. It was not until three weeks later that the timekeeper collected dimes to buy a wreath for Hecksher's funeral. Gran'pa Scoble survived him by almost a month and was buried with much ceremony by the United Machinists.

Everybody in the enclosure belonged to the union, except Zellner, who did not regard its scope as sufficiently international, though he was on fairly amicable terms with most of its adherents and had not been known to miss a union clambake in years. Bram joined it and was entitled to wear a junior member charm on his watch-chain. Fortunately he joined on the eve of the yearly frolic. He himself sold a hundred tickets to the clambake, at seventy-five cents each, and this effort gave him a free admission.

The machinists did nothing on a small scale. They engaged five special cars, each with a large banner on both sides, "Shop Forty Clambake," and the train rolled out from the park early on Saturday afternoon.

It was spring, and the country was a dream. Rain had fallen in the morning, and the air was hazy and perfumed. The sun, riding high, sucked up the moisture from the green cornfields. Thick horse-chestnut leaves, as large as two hands, brushed against the car-windows. Bram had not left the town since two summers before, when he was yet at school, and he was as entranced as if he were looking at the first painting he had seen. They were rushing with exhilarating speed through meadows of waving grass, through orchards snowy with apple-blossoms, and over a bridge past cows standing motionless in the rushes. Haggertha and Trego, sitting opposite him, pointed out the homes of certain shop-mates.

"That's Coughlan's over there, Fido. With all them cabbages in the front yard you'd think it was a Dutchman lived there."

"You bet, and he's got some Stonemason Drumheads—the best for sauerkraut. I got a row of them myself. Just beginnin' to head."

Nobody else looked out, and when the sun began to pour into the car, the yells of protest were terrific.

"Hey there, Dartnell! Pull down them blinds, will you?"

All the shades on the sunny side were yanked down. The men sang, told stories, swigged from bottles, and smoked pipes and cigars until the atmosphere became fouled and milky-opaque. In another hour the cars stopped and the merrymakers got out stiffly. They

were in front of a country saloon; over a gate that led into an orchard was a sign: "Twenty-Mile House Grove. Picnics and Socials."

By the gate stood the timekeeper, who passed out cards and bantered everyone in a cajoling way. Bram got a card. It read:

"Lemuel Greer Porson, Republican Candidate for Sheriff, Respectfully Solicits your Support at the Polls. A Fair Deal for the Workingman is his Motto."

Thin cheers for "Hat-peg" echoed amid the trees as the arrivals marched into the grove. Here, under elms, were planks laid on barrels and covered with glass mugs. Back of each stand were kegs of beer piled on their sides. Electric-light wires were strung overhead. Schlemmer, looking worried and shouting at nobody in particular, was running about in shirt-sleeves, but a blue ribbon with "Committee" on it, pinned to his vest, lifted the mystery from his actions. He pounced on Bram and affixed a similar device on him.

"There, that's a good fellow. Start some entertaining."

That was a large order. But there was nothing anybody could do without a brass band. The men were scattered about, looking sedate and self-conscious in contact with nature and the silence. Most of them set about getting themselves drunk as soon as possible. Some of the more public-spirited donned aprons and poured beer into the mugs. A group of the elderly,

which included Jeens's Strassburg geese, walked under the trees and smoked, talking about their gardens, their children at school, and what patent medicines were best for their ailments. So far there was no hilarity, for men were not made happy merely by the process of being turned out to grass; but the thud of mallets, as beer barrels were broached, portended release. Five junior members set up a target and blazed at it with revolvers.

Bram ran into Coughlan. "Here, Tom," he said. "Let me pin this ribband on you. I've got nothing to entertain with."

"All that workingmen want, kid, is to be let alone," said Coughlan. He was pleased with the tag and put it around his hat—a battered straw. Bram liked him, liked his stupid face with its goggles and owl-like expression and slow smile that belied the malice of his nature. Why was it that most of the shop favourites were both stupid and malicious? Coughlan's bulk, for he was a corpulent and towering man, gave him a dominance in the shop, and he was the mechanics' oracle on political questions. He was agent for a brand of hand-soap that came in green tins, and he added to his income by peddling it from machine to machine; he had more friends and acquaintances than anybody else in the building.

"Let's go over to that tree and sit down. We got a political meeting on."

The timekeeper was there, several of the foremen,

representatives of all the departments, and strangers from other shops.

"It's the first time in the history of the Atlas that one of the officials has been nominated for public office," he was saying. "We ought to take pride in that fact. Porson will make a mighty fine sheriff. There's nobody can deny that. We're all behind him. We've all got to get behind him. He's well known in the other shops, as everybody knows here. The timekeepers all over the Atlas will pass out cards and do all they can to put him over. And, with the co-operation of the officers of the United Machinists, nothing will be lacking to ensure his election this fall."

There was a clapping of hands, and the timekeeper sat down, quite pleased with himself. Coughlan grunted.

"That was one hell of a speech. Worst I ever heard, honest. It'll be tough on Hat-peg if he can't get some fellows to hand out a better line than that. There will be something terrible lacking in votes if the spielers are no better than they start out to be. I'm for a personal canvas. The personal touch—nothing like it. If Wragg don't make another speech, I'll promise to get Hat-peg every vote in the shop—except the hard-boiled Democrats."

The cheers burst out; the men applauded and smote the mortified Wragg on the back and wrung Coughlan's hand warmly.

"You can do it, Coughlan! You're the boy to hand out the soft soap!"

Then distant cries arose for Coughlan. He was an indispensable person, famous and greatly esteemed. He was escorted away to the nearest beer stand, where he guzzled for half an hour in the midst of his admirers. A fire had been built in a shallow pit, and bars were thrown over the flames.

"Hey, Coughlan!" "Where's Coughlan?" "Bring him over, the clams are waiting for him."

He hobbled over before the fire and sat down in an easy-chair that had been rushed from the saloon. Willing assistants obeyed Coughlan's commands, shoving wash-tubs full of clams over the heat and covering them with tarred sail-cloth to keep in the steam. They brought him mugs of beer, which he emptied. They lit a cigar for him. They held his watch for him before his eyes. In due time a phenomenon occurred: savoury vapours arose from the tubs, and Coughlan got the credit for it.

"Tom Coughlan," shouted Schlemmer, "he knows how to do it. He's baked 'em at every bake of the United Machinists since ninety-four—hain't you, Tom?"

The chef, now very drunk, turned upon them eyes cherry-red from the smoke, and uttered sounds that were received by his auditors as respectfully as the Gospel.

"Ay—since 'way back in ninety-four. Time of

Cleveland. He was good President. Dam' good man. Hat-peg's good man, d'you get me, fellows? Ay—cooked 'em every year 'cept in nineteen six, when th' dam' clams had spavin or somep'n and was scarce. You know what we did—say, know what we did? Cooked hog an' hominy! But clams is better for men. Makes 'em younger. Clams never failed once on me—'cept in ninety-four. Cleveland wasn't to blame—even if he was a Democrat. There's the right way with clams—go easy with th' heat, give 'em twenty-five minutes, no more, and just let 'em smile open." He heaved himself up. "All right now, Dartnell. Pull 'em off fast."

He waved his hands to indicate that his responsibility had ceased. The young men pulled away the tubs and emptied them out on the spread tarpaulins, and the feast got under way. On a log, with a panful of clams before them, and a handy keg of beer with a spout, sat some of the oldsters who were Bram's friends. Jeens was among them, with a Panama hat and white trousers; Zellner, almost unrecognizable in a clean shirt; and others of the tool gang.

"The boys are all here?" asked Jeens, looking about him. "Banks hasn't showed up yet, has he?"

Schlemmer came in with: "Give him time. He'll be here. He knows the shop committee of the United got sore when he said what he did. 'I get enough of you fellows six days a week without going out of my way

to see more of you'—huh! There's no man big enough to say that to the United."

"No, not quite," said Jeens. "He need not have said that."

Bram gathered that while the affair was mainly social, with the hopes of enough surplus to put into the treasury after the beer was paid for, it was not wholly devoid of politics. The group spoke in low voices. He pieced it out that in August the agreement with the union would terminate, and that if Banks did not come, it would mean the Atlas would not renew it, and that if he did come, it would be like bearing the olive-branch.

At dusk the embers in the fire-pit grew into a bonfire, and the younger men marched about it waving their mugs and yelling like Comanches. This was the centre of festivities, and the barrels were rolled thither to be tapped. Somebody, quite drunk, had abandoned a cornet, and Bram, who had once played in a school orchestra, played upon it "The Campbells are Coming." Zellner appeared with a fiddle and, mounting on a barrel, sprayed the evening air with notes as sharp and clear as hail-stones. The music gathered the crowd from all quarters. Coughlan, supported by his acolytes, sang "I'm Tying the Leaves so They Won't Fall Down," with touching effects in the minor.

The wassail grew louder as darkness closed in, the bonfire crackled higher, fed with planks, and the thumping of barrels sounded like tomtoms in the

jungle. Figures toppled over, inert. The riot lessened. Zellner, casting aside his fiddle, essayed a Cossack dance on a tarpaulin and fell backward into a well of clam-juice. Helped by one or two other survivors, Bram dragged him towards the trees.

Zellner disposed of for the time being, they went back, with Bram in the rear. Someone emerged from the darkness and looked about him. It was Council Banks, who leaned on his stick, with his jutting beard more austere and challenging than ever. Even in this soft, nocturnal framing the man was a figure of dread. Did he never, Bram wondered, relax into a semi-tolerant indulgence towards his fellow beings? It should be made known that he had arrived. That was of tremendous importance. The casualties had been great, numbers had gone home, by mutual assistance, and the quorum was small and decidedly not sober. Bram went over to him. The Goth's teeth were shining through his beard.

"Dartnell's kid, eh? What's going on here, a cock-fight?"

Bram checked himself after an impulse to strike the face. The Goth looked elsewhere in contemptuous disregard. Bram decided to bring back the old man's eyes.

"Not necessarily, sir. But there might be a fight later. Stay where you are, and I'll bring somebody over. You are very late."

Banks went rigid, and his cheeks tightened. Bram

called after his companions, who returned, one of them carrying a mug of beer. They were maudlin, but still conscious. The mug was held out, the Goth nodded, after a moment of hesitancy held it up, then drank it off.

"Looks like there's some good Indians lying by the fire there," he said. His teeth shone again through his beard. The men laughed. The *entente cordiale* had been re-established, and, with a "Good-night," he turned and stumped away. The representatives of the United Machinists retired to make report to whatever survivors might be. They perceived Schlemmer reeling towards them.

"Banks came, Slammy. It's all O.K."

"Aw—Banks—t'hell with him. Say—what's wrong with the kid, fellows? Dartnell looks queer. C'mon, let's give him a drink."

CHAPTER SEVEN

"DARTNELL'S kid."

He was not sure, after all, that he should not have struck Banks full in his abhorrent face. The crime might have been unutterable, but to have one's name spoken as if it were a term of ignominy is the most mortifying of insults. There was no odium inherent in being the son of Peter Dartnell. The superb rise of Peter from Blacksmith to honour, high place, and the title of "the Bird King" in the distrusted world outside the Atlas had exacted for him the respect of those who remained within it. Bram took the phrase as a contemptuous dismissal and as a judgment that his efforts at self-realization had failed. His fellow workers did not regard him as one of themselves. And they were not exactly fellow workers. They were full-fledged mechanics, a cut above him, who properly regarded apprentices with a modicum of contempt as greasy and impudent nuisances who were always asking questions. He had made a wrong start. He should have remained at his books and later gone on a path that led from them. He looked about him with sudden hopelessness.

He beheld Schlemmer, who was standing at his vice, holding up a shining gauge and looking at it

with an expression of beatitude. Schlemmer turned and saw him.

"That was a great party, huh? How's th' old head this morning? Tell yuh what, if the next bake is half as good, they'll have to go some!"

He was grateful to Schlemmer, even if he was always patronizing. He was a perfect example of the more intelligent mechanics in the gallery. He shuffled about on his flat feet, talked out of the corner of his mouth, which was drawn down in a faint sneer, and talked to foremen with a sort of good-humoured acquiescence that never quite hid the implication that he thought they were a bunch of idiots. He had conceit enough not to undervalue his own worth, and for that everybody thought the more of him. That was a sensible attitude. To attain it could very well be a man's whole business in life. To accept oneself for better or for worse was not enough. A hard and beastly streak was necessary if one had to rise, or even survive.

These thoughts mingled in Bram's head with the clatter of his machine. Then a resonant shouting of orders came towards him from the aisle. Directing a broom-and-shovel campaign down the gallery was the boss of the floor-sweepers. There was a man who had risen. He was a chunky gnome of an Italian, with pig-eyes, whose lack of inches had militated against his achieving success with the regulation shop broom. But his cockiness, loud bark, and huge moustache had

impressed Banks as signs of worth, and he had created him boss. By privilege of rank he dined yearly in the Trocadero, at the foremens' banquet. He was a forcible and self-respecting character who held apprentices in profound disesteem.

Coughlan, bleary-eyed and less steady on his feet than usual, was coming down the aisle. He had transported his bulk up to the gallery to receive congratulations on his culinary exploit of the night before. He extended his hand to Bram.

"Put it there, kid. How goes it?" He scraped his throat and gave his glasses a rub. "Ah—who's got the best roosters, the Greek or the guy from Worcester? I didn't know but you might have heard of th' little main t'morrow night."

The question annoyed Bram. He took not the remotest interest in cock-fights, and he had heard nothing of the "little main." Yet here he was, asked for his judgment of the probable outcome of the affair. The towering hulk of a man was peering at him respectfully. If Bram guessed aright, nothing could do more to procure him the esteem of the established men of the Atlas, of whom Coughlan was representative. One guess was as good as another.

"Well, what do you think—just in a offhand sort of way?"

"Put the money on the Greek birds."

Coughlan blinked, considered the advice, shook his hand again, then moved away. Bram was filled with

misgivings now. That had been a weakness, to make any prophecy at all. He even knew very little of the two promoters. The "guy from Worcester" was a Massachusetts boxing-referee who matched birds in the dull season. A minor breeder, as also was the Greek, and not to be mentioned in the same breath as Peter Dartnell; still, these scrub combats were followed by the sporting crowd. The Greek hovered vaguely in his consciousness as an insolent cheap politician with a derby hat pulled over his eye, who was always getting arrested for something, for recourse to the knife instead of the cheque-book in disagreements over accounts of long standing, for selling over-ripe bananas, or chocolates smeared over with a fatal brand of brown house-paint. He had seen him in the saloon once or twice and heard Madgett speak of him. Richer than the "guy from Worcester," he was probably also the shrewder in the matter of birds.

"Mr. Dartnell?" It was an apprentice of his own age. "Mr. Coughlan is opening a book on the fight. Says you can come in, 'n' that the sky's the limit."

Having gone thus far, he could not withdraw. He gave the apprentice two five-dollar bills. It was too late now. It was all that he had in the world, but the apprentice pocketed it with indifference and went over to Schlemmer.

"Take 'em," said the Finn. "Two bones—but that's all I got. I kiss 'em good-bye. Them pools of Coughlan keep me busted."

The noon of the day after, Coughlan, accompanied by two mechanics with faces appropriately discharged of all expression, came up, made payments here and there, and counted into Bram's hand fifty dollars in dirty small bills. He thrust them into his pocket, dazed. The science of gambling was too intricate for him to work out. You laid a bet, and you lost it or got it back larger than before. He had a sudden respect for Coughlan. Coughlan's brain engineered pools of all descriptions. He was an authority on prizefights, wrestling-matches, bird mains, all manner of games and races and every conceivable form of athletics on which a dollar might be won or lost. He was versed in all speculations and illegalities. He was an entrepreneur of discreet pleasures, and his name was known uptown where poker-faced men in green baize aprons raked in chips, and ladies who desired to increase their strictly private clientele sent their cards to him. But he was best known for his pools. And the winner of the lion's share was stamped with a *cachet*.

The timekeeper came over, confidential and sportive, with thumbs stuck into the arm-holes of his green velvet vest.

"I knew there was something in the wind when you backed the Greek," he said. "And I says: 'That's where the wind blows!' Cleaned up ten smacks on the main. How did you come out?"

"Fifty to the good," murmured Bram, counting the money again.

It was surprising how smoothly things went after that. His reserved way was put down to offishness derived from much wealth. The foreman of the floor-sweepers delegated a man to clean up his machine for him. The apprentices were deferential. The mechanics nodded to him when he passed by. He overheard a remark or two:

"That Dartnell's got a head on him."

"He's pretty well heeled, you bet."

Had ever, he wondered, had ever fifty dollars done so much for anyone? He told Zellner about it. The engraver fished up a blank from behind his tool-box.

"Now that you are ahead, you must do the right thing by yourself. Subscribe to the *Monthly Worker*."

He invited the dumbfounded Trego and Haggertha to dinner with him that night at the Trocadero. On the way home he purchased a drawing-board, some instruments, paper, and a treatise on gears and mechanical drawing. He dressed himself in his blue suit and at eight o'clock entered the restaurant. His two friends, who stood mutely at the door, followed him. The banquet-hall, the sole dining-room in the place, was a vision of splendour. It was a mahogany-lined establishment on a side street, with artificial palms, an epergne on each table, and bald-headed waiters in low-cut vests, whose shining scalps he had seen often from the outside, above the expensive curtains. No-

body he ever knew, except foremen, had dined there. Nobody he knew had the three requirements necessary for dining there: leisure, taste, and a full bank-account. The head waiter bowed them to a table in the middle of the room and fetched him a menu card.

"What would you like, Fido?"

Haggertha tried to hide his fists under the cloth, thought, then looked helplessly at Trego.

"Oh," said Trego, "maybe we'd like some steak—'n' a little soup."

Bram ordered a palm-heart salad, *filets aux champignons*, roast squab and guava jelly, braised endives, some dessert or other, and a bottle of champagne. He knew what champagne to get. Haute Colline, a pale straw wine of small vintage, delicate, but not very expensive. He had heard it well spoken of by Madgett. The waiter uncorked it and contrived a loud and flattering pop. A patron at one of the less desirable tables lowered his outspread paper and looked in the direction of the sound. Bram turned slightly. It was Council Banks, peering over his spectacles.

They began dining. Haggertha upset a tumbler, and Trego made the mistake of trying to wrest the silver *filet*-platter from the grip of the waiter. The manager circled about them deferentially, with soft footfalls.

"Is everything satisfactory, sir?"

Everything was. The manager and the two waiters saw to that.

"Hoist 'em again, fellows!" said Trego, now thawed

out and easy. "I'll give a little toast to the best fellow in the Atlas—outside of present comp'ny. Here's to ol' Fritz Zellner!"

They clinked and drank. Then there was a distant and highly irritable ring. A neglected customer was striking a glass with his knife. A waiter prevailed upon himself to desert the star patrons for the moment and went over. Banks paid the bill, folded up his paper with much pounding of the fist, then stalked out.

"Hullo," said Trego, putting down his wine, "that was Council. Just think o' that, fellows. Crikey, we're in the old boy's boarding-house!"

"Wonder where he's headed for now?" asked Haggertha.

"Violet, dear Violet," Trego sang softly. "I bet you, fellows, she'll be starting a house of her own soon. I saw her downtown all dolled up in a white fur coat. She looked like a piece of coal sticking out of snow, but she sure did look swell—real Dixie class."

"Had enough, everybody?" asked Bram. "Anything more you don't want?"

"We had everything," said Trego. "How about a little beer? I got three bottles, locked up in the cabin of the *Shop Boy*. What d'you say we go for a boat ride?"

Bram settled the account with a sheaf of grimy dollar bills, and they walked out, crossed lighted streets, and struck towards the Atlas, entered a region

of blackness which ended only at the glim near the bridge. They stepped into the boat, which rocked through swirls and chugged smoothly into the quiet heart of the labyrinth. Near the foundry Trego shut off the engine. It barged lazily over water as smooth as glass and reflecting the red bursts of sparks from the furnace, then drifted into alternate patches of darkness, where the channel meandered between Cyclopean walls of black masonry, then into spaces that were open and breezy and filled with the odour of pine and bark, for these were the lumber-yards. There were lighted caves, and glimmerings that flicked on and off, and voices of watchmen, like souls lost in Cimmerian gloom. Heads appeared in high shop-windows, and across the blinds of the draughting-office figures grew large, retreated, and faded off. The black mass of Shop Forty, pierced with squares of light, loomed up, welcome and comforting. Trego opened the cupboard and drew forth bottles. The three sprawled on the bottom of the boat, with coats behind their backs, and drank.

"That was funny, dam' funny, about our having supper with Council," Trego mused. "Wasn't that funny, Fido?"

Haggertha, with eyes and the bottom of a bottle turned up to the dark sky, could make no answer. He settled himself prone, so as to drink with more facility.

"Well, he's a good feeder. All superintendents are

good eaters, just like generals. I guess they got to have some form of amusement after putting in a hard day at the shop. Council never eats lunch. Hasn't in twenty years. I remember when he was the Hat-peg in the old days, and he used to go home every noontime and have a great lunch. The wife used to cook a big steak or a chicken for him, and he'd put it down and a whole pie on top and wet it just right with a pint of cream ale. A pretty little woman she was. Belonged to two euchre societies, liked hats, dresses, and plenty of shoes, and shopped all the time when she wasn't playing cards or cooking for Council. Well, she got tired of fixing three big meals a day and sweating over a hot stove. She wanted another house—out towards the country more. After a year of begging, she got one, and they moved out. Coughlan gave them a hand in moving. Dam' near broke his back, all the boxes of dresses and fancy ribbons he had to carry to the truck.

"Then Council began to get thin. He couldn't eat the grub in the dago joint outside the gate at noontime. He wouldn't eat at all in the middle of the day. He got so ornery that he fired half the men in the gang and wouldn't take them back until the next morning. After this kept up a couple of months, Coughlan told him what a fool he was—that a woman who would move out so far away that her husband couldn't eat his lunch at home—her love was dead. D'you hear that, Fido? 'Her love was dead.' Those was Coughlan's words. Well, it broke Council all up. He found

out it was true. Then after a while she divorced him for cruelty. He's a widower now. But he still don't eat any lunch. He makes up for it at night. Goes to the Trocadero. I hope we didn't spoil his digestion for him."

Haggertha stirred and cast the last of the bottles overboard.

"How about a little fishin'? Let's see if the new trolling-hooks with the frog is any good here."

The boat had now drifted to the stone embankment at the base of the shop, and they could hear the monody of a sleepless dynamo in the basement. That was the only sound in the infinite stillness.

"Yes," mused Trego, "there's queer things about some men in Forty, and queer things happening all the time in the Atlas, only you never suspect them. Get that pole, Fido, and ease off. It's time to go home."

Haggertha stood up. Somewhere above, a window opened with a dry scream, and a stream of light poured out. The three looked up. An arm flung out twice; something struck the water, and drops splashed on their faces.

"Ease off there, Fido! First thing, we'll have a chunk of iron on our heads."

The *Shop Boy* chugged back to its harbour. Bram parted with his companions at the bridge and went home. It had been a satisfying night, and the striking

of the glass in the Trocadero rang again like a dream music and lulled him to sleep.

Towards the end of June he felt that he had taken upon himself a heavier load than he was capable of sustaining. It was difficult to live up to the rôle of sporting oracle. He did all he could to parry the questions, but the more evasive he became, the more he was regarded as primed with inside information. He let himself be invited by Coughlan, Wragg, the timekeeper, and two or three mechanics who solicited for the shop pools, to a German saloon near the canal. It was the chief rendezvous of the Atlas mechanics.

His hosts were all agreeable, and a waiter kept the lidded steins filled with imported beer. Their pleasantness set him more at ease, but gave him no inner light. It was only three days before the greatest bird main of the year, for Peter Dartnell was to stage what was known around Atlas City as the "annual royal." Coughlan looked at Bram in the yearning and simple way of a child that wanted to be taken into confidence.

"I never saw anything like it," he said. "Never in my life. All watertight this time, and not a word of dope anywhere. In fact, they might all be ducks."

He shook his head. He was getting drunk early, and his face looked like a round suet pudding. The drunker he got, the easier it was for him to put questions that were indirect, and he waggled his grey head as if he were wrestling mentally in an effort to master the secret that Bram did not possess.

"Perhaps you can say—not that you have to if you think you hadn't ought to say—whether the birds will carry the old Cornish galls?"

"No, they won't. They'll be equipped with Mexican spurs."

"Well and good! Mexican spurs makes a bloody fight, and good for the pool. Hear that, fellows? Good for the pool."

"Now, if you wasn't interested and didn't care a pin one way or another—no more than if you was a minister, say—what, between us, man to man, seeing that all of us works in the Atlas and is friendly, what might you say the outcome would be?"

There was no escape from it. Whatever he said, he knew he would regret later. He would be as noncommittal as he could.

"It all depends on the yolks, Coughlan. And I don't think my father has been troubled with addled eggs lately."

Instantly the strain was over. Coughlan's slow and sad expression gave way to an expansive and malicious smile. The others threw back their heads and laughed loudly. Wragg was convulsed and slapped his thigh helplessly, then choked, coughed, and had to wipe his eyes.

After that the beer came faster, a pale amber beer with a greenish tinge, and they drank round after round, not departing until the lights were dimmed and the regular customers retired to the back room. Arm-

in-arm, they went out merrier than when they had entered. It was too late for Coughlan to get home to his cabbages, so they pushed him up some steps to the door of a boarding-house where he had once lived, propped him against it, and left after jangling the bell.

Bram was too thoroughly uncomfortable to sleep. There seemed no doubt whatever that his honour was involved; also the pocket-book of Coughlan and a dozen others, who did not matter so much. The idea of the consequences alarmed him horribly. He felt no easier the next day. The only solution was to talk it over with his father. It was silly to let false pride stand in the way of tranquillity. So that night he went up. He knocked on the kitchen door, then entered. His father, in shirt-sleeves, smoking a pipe and playing chequers with Olga, got up. He did not look surprised at seeing him. They shook hands.

"You look huskier. I suspect the Atlas is agreeing with you. Still at the gospel shop?"

Olga nodded at him pleasantly, brought in a tray of bottle ale and pretzels, then retired. His father was quietly cordial and not inquisitive and, though it was evident that Porson had kept him informed, asked questions about life in the shops. Bram told him of the clambake, of Zellner's prowess with the fiddle, and of Coughlan, whom his father vowed that he recalled in old days. That touched a chord, and Peter melted in reminiscence and harkened back to his companions

in the blacksmith shop. An hour passed, then two.

"I suppose you know there's a lot of talk about the big main that's coming off tomorrow night, Father?"

Peter tilted himself back in the chair and puffed away stolidly.

"Yuh, there's quite a few asking about it. And maybe the less said about it, the more Lowell money there'll be for us to cover—that right?"

"I believe so."

"I don't deny that Blodgett, the Lowell man, has got some birds worth looking at." Peter righted his chair again and rubbed his scalp, frowning severely. "I'm glad to see you taking a little interest in the sporting line," he said, tearing out a couple of leaves from his note-book and scribbling upon them. "There. That'll let you in with some friends to the main. The old barn, on the Fairchild road."

His father got up and mixed a night-cap, with hot water and lemon. They touched glasses.

"You've done pretty well, Bram; got to admit that," he averred; then he smiled easily. "And I hear you cleaned up on them little Greek birds, too."

Bram felt taken aback. His father blew out an affirmative cloud of smoke.

"And if old Coughlan and the boys ask for some dope, tell them to lay their money on the line where Pete Dartnell's roosters have got their claws. Going?" He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "Tell

Madgett, when you leave through the bar, to give you a pair of Three Star to take along."

Bram murmured his protest, but his father rose and shouted the order into the barroom.

"Couple bottles of the old shipment, Rody. It's for the kid."

They shook hands. "Be around again soon. Your room is still here."

CHAPTER EIGHT

"It's all in the yolk, eh?" said the timekeeper, giving a covert wink as he passed by.

He was the tenth man to repeat that phrase during the day, and Bram had wearied of hearing it. But it was not a bad phrase; it was rather a good phrase, not committing him to anything, and it had an implication of wit somewhere in its obscurity. Down on the iron floor a monster turbine for a South American battleship was going up. Usually when such a job was begun, bets were laid on how long it would take to finish. This time that conjecture was left to the engineers. All funds available were trickling into Coughlan's classic, the Dartnell-Lowell main pool.

From time to time, until the afternoon waned, apprentices from below made sorties to collect last-minute wagers. In the last hour Zellner's gang was deprived of the privileges of participation, for the Hatpeg was rampant in the enclosure. It was a difficult hour. A tool-maker had mistaken the decimal point in a rough sketch and had cut off a bronze shell three-thousandths of an inch under size. Its value was three dollars. Porson raved as if it had cost a thousand, with no salvage. He pounded the bench and bellowed at both Zellner and the mechanic. The defiance of the

culprit prolonged the scene. He was a deformed Esthonian, with the face of an aged and battered cat. At Porson's invectives he shook with hatred and held out claws as if he would rend him to pieces. His eyes were wet with impotent rage. He could do no more than open his mouth wide in faint screams, with a feline lift of his sparse Mongolian moustache; and foam, in white filaments, threaded his lips, between which emerged snagged and protuberant greenish teeth.

"The next time that happens here, Zellner," shouted Porson, dashing the sweat off his brow, and turning around, "there'll be a general cleaning-out."

Zellner was calm. "A slip-up will happen once in a while," he said, thumbing a mound of snuff into each nostril. "Pestov is a good man, I told you. You'd better watch the other departments, where money goes into big hunks of metal."

Wragg, the timekeeper, came over and weighed the bushing on the scale that stood near the engraver's vice, then filled out a document which the three of them signed.

"Other departments are more efficient than this," Porson insisted.

"They would be if you stayed down where you belong, and watched them. That's the first thing spoiled here in close to a year. And the next time this sort of ruckus happens, I'll throw that scale out of the window. It costs me good men. I'll have to fire Pestov tomorrow."

"No! D'you hear? He's learned what efficiency is. You'll keep him on."

"Then I'll insist that he resigns. I wouldn't have a man around here that would stand for a bawling-out like that. Wouldn't have him around at ten cents an hour, not if he was a watch-maker."

Porson left. It was not his fault that some of his men, after having made an error, chose to leave at once rather than try to explain anything so inexplicable, thereby depriving the Atlas of services that vastly outweighed the value of spoiled goods. At least, the principle remained intact.

It was quitting-time. The Esthonian sidled out, muttering; the others had hurried on before him, pulling on their coats. Zellner locked up his tool-box and drawer in his deliberate and unhurried way, which calmed Bram, who had been sickened by the episode. A reserved smile played about his set mouth, as if he could not disguise his approbation over having discovered another secret vulnerability in the system of which he was a foe. Bram watched him unperceived. The religion of Zellner was the Movement, and it was also that of Jeens. The two were alike in one respect: they were what they had been born, and had not undergone change. Jeens looked upon himself as an advanced socialist, a century or two in advance of the Hungarian, whom he looked upon as a crude and dangerous man, no better than a syndicalist. Progress, to Jeens, was no illusion; he believed that the soul of

man had developed along with his tools, though there were recalcitrants who needed special discipline. He was a religious whose psalm was '*Laborare est orare.*' Zellner was a dirty, heavy-handed individual, but not one to be dismissed. He had a streak of the luminous in him. That's what he was—a human glow-worm. Of the two, Bram preferred Zellner.

He moved over and spoke to him. "There's a bird main across the river tonight. I have some passes. You don't want to come, I suppose?"

Zellner appeared glad of somebody to talk to. "I don't know why not. It's a social phenomenon. One of those manifestations. Very good."

Bram waited for him at the bridge, and he appeared at half past seven. They decided to go over on foot. Let the others go on the street-cars if they wanted to. After a day in the shop it was pleasanter to wander across country. Zellner hulked along, stooping like a bison, with hands thrust into the pockets of a pea-jacket. Their path took them along the river's edge, under massed elms, purplish in the dusk. They skimmed flat stones over the water. They aimed sticks at the protrusive heads of black eels. They came to a cinder track and a group of youths in white trunks, who crouched, then at a puff of smoke scampered off in the silence like rabbits. The "phut" of the pistol sounded a moment afterwards. They were college students, visitants from another realm.

"Eleven and two-fifths for the hundred yards,"

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said the engraver, who had pulled out a silver watch. "Just practice, but not bad. I respect them. I'm no good. Sixty is an age."

Then he began to skip and trot in his elastic-side shoes. They climbed a hillock and struck the road, trudged up it for a mile, then over a fence and into a meadow. The moon, which had shouldered out as full as an orange, glittered on a pair of wires that strung from the road to a barn far down in the hollow.

"We're safe," Bram said. "Before the sheriff gets on his way, the signal will be at the barn a half-hour ahead of him."

A youth at the door turned a flash-light on the pass, then pushed them in, and they entered through a slit in a canvas drop. The interior, already crowded, was formed like a bowl, and the seats were benches arranged in a dozen concentric rings. At the bottom was a pit, six yards across, matted with straw and lighted by a shaded carbon lamp, which cast off an odour of heated metal. They groped their way towards it and found seats at the ring-side.

Buzz and smoke filled the air. The place had been built originally for clandestine prizefights, and it must have held a thousand spectators. Bram recognized across from him the mechanics of Shop Forty, banked a hundred strong, with Coughlan in the middle. Zellner, peering about, remarked that the whole of the Atlas was present. A man in a sweater vaulted into the pit and opened a box with an "L" marked on it.

"Who's that, Dartnell?"

"Blodgett of Lowell. There's a pretty bird for you, real pit game."

The fighter stalked to the centre, as gawky as a hobbledehoy girl, then drew itself up until its body became vertical. The rump was trimmed close, and the wings clipped at three inches from the glistening and metallic body. Murmurs, critical and approbative, arose like the deep humming of wires. With a slamming of hard wings, out bounced a second bird, equally cropped, but with head given a touch of scarlet paint. It had been released from the box opposite. Roars and hand-clapping sprang up, as at a circus. The man who had released it got up. Bram gave a cheer as a wave of filial pride rose through him. It was his father, the dean of all main-masters in the United States.

Coughlan, waving his arms, bellowed: "Atlas! Put 'em over for the Atlas, Pete!"

The uproar kept on, for the fowls had whisked together and risen into the air. They were spurred like cavalrymen. In this state of levitation a great deal happened, of technical, if not of dramatic, interest. Then they jounced beak to beak over the straw, a yard at a time. They pirouetted, they spun, they went up like rockets. Gravitation was a nuisance, but they defied it by climbing invisible steps and fighting every inch of the way up with snake-like darting of their heads. Touching ground once more, they vaulted high

like ballet-dancers in embrace, and the red-head whirred his steel.

Coughlan hallooed. "Red-head, red-head," chanted the mechanics.

The Lowell bird had tumbled over and over, like a lobbed bonnet, and lay still, as if in disgust. Was it all over? Bram stared and saw that it was disembowelled. So that's what the matter was with it.

Dartnell, with heavy gloves, seized his bird in the midst of its victorious gambades and shoved it into another box. There was another match, and Dartnell had won again. Then a Lowell bird killed Dartnell's, and killed again after that. The spectacle was not keeping up. The next fight was a draw, both fowls slashed beyond repair. After their necks were twisted, they were dropped into buckets. That happened once more, and everybody jeered. Bram loosened his belt to alleviate a feeling of sickness. The oxygen in the barn was exhausted, the carbon lamp glimmered like the sun low in a mist, giving out the acrid smell of polecats, and the heat was sucking up steam from the red-wet straw beneath. Two men jumped in and fanned the air with a length of canvas.

"Say, do you call this a fight?" groaned someone in protest. There were lacerating catcalls. "What's this, a canary show?" "Anybody want to play tiddle-de-winks with me?" "S'more action, Pete!" "Bring out the red-head!" Then the chant began: "Red-head, red-head, red-head," uttered in a score of accents.

The seventh and last round would be decisive. There was a lull of ten minutes, which was devoted to conversation and the drinking of bottled beer, sold by youths who clambered everywhere with baskets. Those on the upper benches tossed bottle-caps upon those lower down. Zellner, enjoying his pipe, discussed whisky with his neighbour, who was Jeens's helper, Otto. They enumerated a dozen brands and were agreed that whisky was not so good as it had been in the old days. Otto insisted that in the old days the cock-fights had been better. Bram wondered vaguely if he had not come into the Atlas altogether too late. Opposite him was Coughlan, arguing with somebody behind him.

"I've got ten smackers on our end," said Otto. "Old Coughlan's gone in heavy, too, but we're all a lot of pikers alongside Pete. He's got three thousand down on those roosters."

"Ready!" shouted a watch-holder near the ring.

"C'mon with the red-head, Pete!" "Atta boy!"

The Atlas cohorts began their chanting, punctuated by yips and jeers. Cigars were burning down close to the wet butts, and the odour of the carbon lamp and the steam from the pit yielded an effluvium enough to make anyone sick. Bram loosened his collar, for the sweat was guttering down his neck, and there was a dull thumping at his temples. He thrust a cigarette between his lips, but his last match fell from his fingers. He stared down at his father. Peter, looking

bored, lighted a cigar, stooped, raised the lid of the smaller box, and tipped it over.

A thousand heads turned slowly, as if mounted on pivots, to watch the emerging of the bird. It moved across the straw, stretching its legs and putting down its claws with the velvet steeliness of a pianist going dreamily through a passage *adagio*. Its eyes glittered like agate buttons. The sight evoked a stir of the primeval in every spectator. The doom of that spark of brother life, hatched expressly to fight, was to die as gloriously as might be in combat, and most eyes beheld it with affection, for it was the one popular bird of the night. Suddenly it drew itself up and crowed.

"Bring on them hundred biddy hens!" shouted Otto.

There was a pattering of laughter. Dartnell grinned and brushed off his gloved hands. The Lowell man opened his Pandora box and ushered out his best fowl. That, too, was a bird beautiful to gaze upon. The feathers of both shone with the iridescence of fish-scales, and their shanks were rigged with long, curved Mexican spurs, riveted and lashed with waxed thread.

The birds ruffed and caracoled. As they descended from their saltations, the ruffs seemed to buoy them like parachutes. They rose with speed and a droll precision, as if springs had been wound up inside them. In mid-air they displayed such efferescence

that they became things of the spirit. Simultaneously they became aware of their spurs. In one aerial *bravura* they whirred with such vibrating of pinions and hacking of steel that the sound was like the gyrating of a rattle.

"They're waking up now," breathed Otto, after five minutes.

The birds appeared soaked in red ink. Long slits opened and closed in their flesh, and the feathers dropped off in wet gobbets. They bounced up and curved over, shuttlecock-wise, spurring briskly on the down strokes until their legs were peeled to the bone. they drove and ripped with their beaks. The gizzard of the Lowell bird was torn open. Red-head's eyes were both out, hanging like pearls at the end of strings. It was now but a lump of electrified muscle. A sharp rap split its skull, and it lay down with upturned claws. Bram knew that the fight was over because of the yells, the booings, and the jeers. He looked down at his father. Peter threw up his hands and smiled. He had lost three thousand dollars, but he was smiling. He stooped and picked up Red-head by a claw.

"Gentlemen! Here's your chance. Half a dollar's worth of good white chicken-meat to take home. What am I bid? Boil a piece of grindstone with it, and when you can stick in a fork, the chicken is done."

Despite the laughter there were no takers, and he threw the carcass into the bucket and wiped his hands.

Bram felt himself touched on the shoulder. "Shall we go?" Zellner was saying.

"Didn't quite wind up as I had expected," said Bram when they were outside and he had breathed the wind sweeping over the meadow.

"An instructive evening," remarked Zellner. "The birds showed up the best of all. Humans are bloodier and crueller by nature. Cromwell, Peter the Great, the sansculottes that fired the legs of fine ladies from cannons, the Homestead strike—and, worst of all, the System! We got a whiff of it this afternoon when Hat-peg jumped all over Pestov. Yes, the birds got off easier. You didn't lose anything, I hope?"

CHAPTER NINE

He hoped the morning would pass without anyone speaking to him. By noon the fight might be past history, though certain irritabilities and wounds in pocket-books might endure until next pay-day. In the enclosure he drew on his overalls, but, looking down the aisle, he saw that some of the men were continuing to stare at him in silent protest. And after brass checks had all been accounted for, the timekeeper came over slowly, leaned against the bench, and, scraping his nails with a knife, whistled softly.

"So it all depends on the yolk—is that it? A great fight that was. Hat-peg got all hopped up this morning. He lost five iron men in Coughlan's pool. Well, you're a fine dopester. I dropped five myself."

Bram, who had submitted to worse luck, thought the comment unfair. "I couldn't do any more than give my opinion. Could I?"

The timekeeper raised his voice for the edification of those within hearing. "Well, my opinion is that the old hen didn't even have addled eggs under her. What she did was to hatch out a lot of door-knobs."

He walked away, hands in pockets, with a knowing smirk. Bram winced, then glanced about furtively. He was surprised to find that the jibe had evoked no

response, unless it might be a faint grin on the face of Schlemmer, who had turned more at the voice than at the words. It would be best to stay close for a while and keep his mind on his work. The crate of bushings had been milled, all of them, and he had returned to the vice to file. It was difficult to find the work absorbing. His mind was always wandering. He was not in his element. He had given up any idea of finding another sort of life. Chance might again throw him into the world of books, as it had thrown him into this enclosure. If he had only in his composition what the others had, he might be able to put up with it until then.

They seemed to find their little world agreeable. It was tidy and circumscribed, with swept oiled floors, and the geraniums in the window-boxes were in full, red bloom. Pestov watered them every morning. Pestov was still at his vice, deformed, catlike, content. It was as if nothing had happened. They all seemed content, tinkering away, whistling softly; their skilful hands worked of their own volition, leaving their brains in a whirl of hazy, subjective thoughts. In the midst of a pile of castings Schlemmer sat, filing rhythmically, with his eyes fixed dreamily. He looked like a being that had been enchanted in a thicket. What did these fellows get out of it all? A living, no more; unless one counted the happy stability of routine and the anodyne of incessant sound and vibration. Was life within the Atlas much different from

life without? Zellner might be able to tell him. But what could one who was a master in his own world know of the feelings of one who lived in another so alien? There was Zellner, humped over like a huge and benign Oriental god, filing at his cannon-ball vice, absorbed yet watchful. He was more significant than anything else in the whole shop. He was an idol that breathed an incense of onion, smoked red-fish, black cheese, and caraway.

Porson came along, paused, then moved in, like a blowfly drawn in by the reek from a delicatessen-shop. Nobody observed him. Then he turned and went out again. Then Zellner raised his head, and Bram saw the secret and cynical smile again play about his lips as he held a stamp up to the light to examine it. How did Zellner, whose back was towards the entrance, know that the enemy had come and gone? And why should Porson come and go so soundlessly? Was it to perceive any stray feeling of resentment? Just then Haggertha came in, bearing a wet package done up in newspaper, and laid it before the engraver.

"There's a couple of red-fin we caught last night, Fritz."

"Red-fin? That's my favourite joint, Fido. I'd sooner eat red-fin than turkey," he commented, after opening the package and sniffing at the flabby fish within. "By the way, Fido. Going out in the boat tonight? I'd like to come along, if you don't mind. I told Bertha I had a notion to go, so it'll be all right."

"We'll look for you," said Haggertha. "At the bridge about eight o'clock."

Bram wondered who this Bertha might be. She couldn't be a wife. The notion of any woman being married to Zellner seemed incredible, and, again, there were his shirts, notoriously the dirtiest in the shop. A daughter, perhaps, and one who worked somewhere all day. Haggertha came over to him.

"Want to come for a little boat ride? Zellner's coming with us."

Bram did, and so it was arranged. They met after supper.

The *Shop Boy* bore them to the far end of the stream, close to the bulkhead of grassy earth that separated it from the canal. Some short distance below the top was a conduit through which water flowed. Haggertha, with a pipe in his mouth, mumbled about fish coming in and out of it. He vowed that his father once had caught a carp near the spot. Trego thought it an impossibility, and this led to a long and windy argument. Zellner, who knew nothing about fish except how to cook them, was appealed to. He suspended judgment until he had got out, clumsily, and marched back and forth on the bulkhead a number of times, stamping on it, peering all about; then he ventured his belief that such a miracle was possible—forty years ago.

"We can't be arguing here all night," said Trego. "The way to catch fish is not to talk about them."

Haggertha poled away, and the boat chugged in increasing darkness, turned curves, and with engine shut off drifted into the canyon among the great shops, but keeping away from the lights, so that underneath the bow was the solitary patch from the lantern. The engraver was silent. He might not have been there at all, for he sat humped up in the stern, with a coat over his shoulders, and nothing to betray his presence except the intermittent glow from his pipe. Sometimes it went out, as if he were too concerned with thoughts to keep it alive. The *Shop Boy* drifted in a zigzag, bumping lightly and nosing the embankments, like an animal dazed by a light hanging before its eyes. It kept drifting and blundered again within a stone's throw of Shop Forty. Somewhere on the bank a light spluttered, then another and there was hollow, grinding gurgle, followed by waves that sent the *Shop Boy* capering. Trego, leaning over with the harpoon, swore.

"That was a big one," Zellner uttered with composure. "A big iron fish."

"I was just going to stab that sucker when some fool made a splash," complained Trego. "I would of had him, wouldn't I, Fido?"

"I don't know. I guess I might. Well, we've caught four, and that's enough. We'll mosey along home."

Zellner was still wordless and thoughtful when the boat got under the bridge, and he was given a hand in the task of disembarking himself. But he seemed cheerful. Bram invited him to a drink in his rooms.

"I'm obliged, fellows. But I've promised to be home early, for I have a lot to do. Good-night."

Then he was gone. He moved more briskly than usual. The two mechanics, carrying the fish, trudged on with Bram and they gained the room on the third floor. The two bottles of brandy were opened, and, sitting on the cot and the two broken chairs, they drank.

A hurdy-gurdy enlivened the court below with the overture to *Cavalleria Rusticana*. The area was known locally as "Alabama Lane," and on the chart in the police station it was stuck thick with pins.

"It's a rotten place to invite anyone to," said Bram. "Sorry, but I hope the cognac will make up for it."

He opened the window to let in more music, and the three put out their heads. The organ-grinder was playing in a court littered with rubbish from cans upset by large stray dogs in search of bones. The doors were halved, with tops open in the warm weather, and were numbered plainly. At night it was difficult to make out the numbers, and there was a constant flaring of matches struck by obscure visitors, for the neighbourhood of Peniel Mission, by an irony, harboured dark and clandestine enticements.

The organ-grinder went, then a sound of tramping drew nearer. A Salvation Army band came in to deliver Alabama Lane from the power of evil. The exorcism was a weekly ceremony much enjoyed by the settlement.

"There's that drummer that got into the papers," said the absorbed Haggertha. "He worked in the Atlas once. He's rich now."

After the prayer and the loud hymn sung to the clatter of the tambourines, another hymn began, "Are You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb?" A new voice entered, a voice with a rich loveliness, with upper notes that gathered sweetness and grace as they rose to the window and there broke poignantly on their hearts. They looked down curiously. There she was, sitting on her doorstep, a stout mulatto girl with a bruised eye, and her figure swathed in a patched khaki overcoat. The lassies in uniform ceased singing to listen. Even after the band stopped, she sang on, interpolating revival verses and taking her own time to come to the conclusion.

"Hear that?" shouted Trego, as they withdrew for more cognac. "She gave them cards and spades and beat them at their own game, huh?"

"This isn't a place I would like to live in," said Haggertha. "Why don't you move?"

"There's some respectable places," said Trego. "There's some so respectable that a shop hand can't get into them, only clerks from the main office and timekeepers. If he went in, they'd chase him to hell-and-gone."

That was true, he reflected after they had gone. But by the exercise of a little tact he might be able to gain a foothold on the fringe of respectability, if

not in the stronghold. There was no reason why he shouldn't do better for himself. After a search of almost a week he discovered a place on an uptown street, and he moved in, still retaining the key to the room in the mission, for his month's lease had not yet expired. Mrs. Beddoes, the new landlady, was dubious. Bram had been defiant in the matter of wearing a black shirt when interviewing her.

"They run the laundry bills high, the shopmen do. I'm looking for some Japanese students, or some nice Hindu young men. There was a pair of them, brothers, Puttner—or Pinkerjee, something, that had the front room all winter, and very prompt they was and never came home tight. Then there's the little back room that had the handwriting professor for three years. I don't know but I might show it to you, though my tenants is awful particular."

Later she intimated that his personal character was sufficiently good, and he was installed in the professor's room. He paid her three and a half dollars, the rent for two weeks: a low figure to pay for such an ascent in the social scale. After a week he exchanged polite bows with the other roomers. They were persons to be treated with deference. A few times he sat in the parlour to listen to their conversation. They touched on spiritualism, the art of leather-burning, society, and the leading ministers. On no account was the Atlas mentioned. Chief among these beings were an Austrian who owned an upholstery

shop; a firm spinster who was secretary to the manager of a wholesale meat firm and was called Miss Flora; an impressive man, smelling of perfumed soap, who solicited orders for enlarged crayon portraits, and a cherubic person, the wit of the group, who was an undertaker.

On Sunday nights they invited friends, at Mrs. Beddoes's request, and sat about the round walnut table for conversation, tea, and biscuits. The light sifted from a spangled hanging oil-lamp—dimly, as if it had given up struggling against the heavy atmosphere of departed meals. The odour of pot-roast prevailed, sharpened with musk and the scent of dogs. A profusion of walnut stands held stuffed pets, and a bell-glass on the mantelpiece harboured a dozen canaries disposed in lifelike attitudes on a shellacked branch. A pair of fat and mangy pug-dogs, yet to die and be embalmed, sniffed at the calves of strangers, then retired to snooze on valanced rockers. Sheaves of pampas-grass in tall holders diffused an odour of dry-rot and fortified a smell overpowering in its connotation of respectability.

"Mr. Dartnell," said Miss Flora one night on the landing, dressed in a pink corduroy dressing-gown, "I am sure you adore Dickens. Wouldn't you like to buy a pair of tickets to a series of impersonations in the church auditorium tomorrow night?"

He could not withstand her cajolery and hard beaming, so he bought them. The place being genteel

in the extreme, he could very well invite Zellner into it and then take him to the auditorium. The next day he spoke his invitation.

"In church?" echoed Zellner, laying down his file. He fingered his chin. "That's out of my line."

Bram put forth the lure that it might prove educational. The engraver accepted and, pulling down the spectacles from his forehead, read the address that Bram gave him. He also promised to bring along some books that were indispensable for a beginner to read.

At the appointed hour he came, though it was Monday night and as usual he had tarried long in his favourite saloon, the haunt of some Hungarian friends. He smote loudly on the front door, dropping the brass knocker until it rocked the house with the report of pistol-shots. The roomers, alarmed, flocked to the landing and peered over. The door was opened by the scandalized Mrs. Beddoes.

"Dartnell here, ma'am? Young Dartnell that works down to the Atlas?"

She stiffened. "In just a minute, sir; I will see if he is in."

He entered and went up the stairs. "That's all right, ma'am. I'm just one of his shop-mates, and we have an appointment."

Bram had hurried out at the uproar and assisted the foreman into the room.

"I came near being late, Dartnell. It's stuffy here,

so leave the door open, will you?" He lighted his pipe, a brown clay, with the bit wound with string. "I brought the books for you." He read the titles aloud, holding the worn, oil-stained volumes between his hands. They were Jack London's *Before Adam*, Spargo's *Socialism*, Rodger's *History of Prostitution*, and *Maria Monk*. He thought highly of them and delivered their names with resonance.

From the landing a severe figure in pink swept into Miss Flora's room. An agitated shape coming before them resolved itself into Mrs. Beddoes, who bobbed in in a polite fury.

"If you two—gentlemen—don't mind—" Her tones were acidulous. She closed their door with a slam.

"Perhaps we talked a bit too loud," Bram hinted. "This is a very quiet house."

"Never knuckle down to women, Dartnell," said the engraver, sitting heavily on the bed. "That's one thing you've got to learn. There are three kinds of them: those that keep in their place; those that have to be kept in their place; and those that are property, which are the happiest."

If only the door and the partition which divided his room from Miss Flora's were thicker, Bram thought. Zellner began to expostulate in his loud shop manner.

"No man has to put up with that sort of bullying, if he doesn't want to."

Bram poured him out a little cognac. That might

allay him. Zellner gulped it down in one swallow, then began to pace the room with his elephantine tread, grunting his views on women as property. As with all communists, that was an obsession with him.

"Women were the first form of it, d'you understand? Man acquired her back in the primitive state of society, which must have been better than this—for how could any be worse? Don't let the windy fellows like Jeens pack you full of ideas to the contrary. Open their skulls, and you don't find anything but feathers. The first woman was wild, like the animals—deer, mammoths, or whatever cattle were galloping about in those times—and man had to run after her. She liked it. Gave her a high opinion of herself, and she never got over it. She wanted to be run after all the time. But the first man got tired of the incessant chase. He had more sense than you give him credit for, so he clubbed her and made her domesticated. It saved him a lot of time for his inventions, because he got what he wanted without wasting effort on preliminaries."

Zellner waved his hand, as if he were weary of rehearsing fundamental truths to immature minds. Then he rubbed his nose.

"Facts, Dartnell! Facts are what you want. You'll get plenty more before we are through with you, if you don't hang about with that flighty luncheon-eating crowd at Jeens's old lathe."

The door downstairs had already clicked. Unless

Zellner was taken out, he would rampage all night and make things worse. Cognac wasn't the thing to have given him after all that beer. They went out finally and arrived at the church. It was comfortably filled, but they were put into seats far down front. Across the aisle from them was Mrs. Beddoes in a superb black gown covered with glittering sequins, and Miss Flora and the others of the group were about her. The air was charged with the odour of peppermint drops, varnish, and hymn-book covers, and altogether too warm. He would have to fight against drowsiness.

The actor came out and with a specious informality and rubbing of his hands talked about Dickens, bowed, then spun on his heels and dove behind a screen, to reappear as Uriah Heep. Next he came as Mr. Stiggins, with dangling glove fingers. Then he impersonated Mr. Micawber and Captain Cuttle. Zellner could make nothing of it, though at first he lent a deferential ear, but the Cockney accent made further effort useless. His head fell back. He snored. It was getting much warmer. The liquor was soporific, and so was the nasal droning of the impersonator. It had also been a difficult day at the shop. He snored louder. Heads turned in their direction. The task would be now to get him out. Bram elbowed him into consciousness. An usher came mincing towards them and touched Zellner's shoulder. An elderly gentleman in

bankers' grey, he was the embodiment of outraged public sentiment.

"Most disturbing," he whispered. "Many complaints—highly indecorous—you'll have to retire—at once."

Zellner pushed himself up, then lumbered after him down the aisle. Bram followed. The boards creaked underfoot. Countless eyes that should have been directed towards the actor watched their progress along the via dolorosa to the panelled door. The usher closed it at their heels.

Bram felt that he had been knelled out of respectability. The engraver was himself again in the cool air and chuckled as he pulled on his cap. To him the incident, though a mere trifle, was not without its amusing aspect. Then it struck him as excessively comical, and he laughed.

"Nice pair we made—the two of us in that mosque! That Dickson wasn't much of an actor. That his name, you said? Those parsons had no use for us, you could see that! So we got excommunicated. Yes, sir, all but kicked bodily out of the church! Let's go somewhere and drink to the Pope. The Pope's got a whole flock of sheep that they shear wool off of to make him the high-mass robes for St. Peter's."

They gravitated to a low part of the town and into a saloon attached to a workingmen's hotel. Somebody at a piano, a youth in a blue cotton shirt with a puffy face and a weak mouth, was playing well. He

was playing Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata with force and splendour. Zellner, with eyes closed, stood behind him reverently.

The piece over, the youth bent for a long time over the keys, and that silence, too, had its splendour. Then he turned, beheld Zellner's face, and grinned weakly.

"Before a man jumps into the river, he's got to have a little drink, yes?" The engraver's eye was cold. "Where did you get that?"

"Boston Conservatory."

They sat to a table and began to drink beer, with brandy for the pianist. Someone called: "Fritz." Patrons in a corner beckoned them over, and they went, carrying their glasses. One or two were radicals and insisted on standing treat. Zellner introduced Bram to a bulky and iron-grey personage with a sad eye who was smoking a cob pipe. He had a moulders' union pin in his lapel.

"This is Foster Sweeney. He knows all about Irish history, more than anybody in the Atlas. Don't you, Sweeney?"

But Sweeney had the sulks and was reticent that night. He sat down and never opened his mouth, except to smoke and drink. The others were men of quiet and direct words, and good listeners. Bram felt his sense of degradation leaving him. He was comfortable. Zellner threatened the youth with death if he played any more that night, and then ordered more

beer. The men were in black shirts and were sympathetic on learning how they had been treated in the church. In a few minutes Bram was enjoying not only a philosophic composure, but a fluidity of speech that was earning him deference.

The party broke up at two. When Bram returned to the house, he found the door of his chamber locked. Piled on the landing were his telescope bag, suit-case, and the books, crowned with the half-bottle of cognac. The gentility of Mrs. Beddoes had been mortally affronted. He shouldered his belongings and went back to his room in the Peniel Mission.

CHAPTER TEN

AUTUMN found him still there, for he had become as used to his surroundings as a penitent to a hair-shirt. Except when he went out to radical meetings with the burly Zellner, he kept close, reading the books the master forced upon him from his liberal store, or plotting machine diagrams over his swivel drawing-board. Often he studied so late that the knocking of the old tailor's broom reminded him that dawn was only a couple of hours off.

What had made him chiefly aware of Morah was clarinet music. The tailor ended a seance of pants-sewing at ten o'clock, thumped with a goose on an ironing-table for ten minutes, and then, before the odour of scorched cloth had departed, the air was vibrant with sonorous melody. Morah was as punctual as a clock. He was a player of extraordinary skill, and when he blew Handel's *Ode to St. Cecelia*, the hallway was populated with angels and wraiths and wondering derelicts in red undershirts.

Once, when Bram had worked until very late, the tailor, who had seen the crack of light under the door, rapped and came in with some sausages that were still sputtering in the frying-pan. Then there was an improvised breakfast. After that they became friends.

Morah was like a wraith himself, with a mild and lucid eye. Something in him glowed like a star, and that was his intellect. Something about him was like a visible aura, and that was his goodness. In him Bram encountered for the first time that fusion of both, that rarest of human qualities, charm. Sitting cross-legged on his bed and plying his needle, Morah would talk for hours, smiling with serene awareness.

An itinerant pants-maker, he had visited every province in the old world and every large city in the United States. He was an anarchist and had been a friend of Prince Kropotkin. He talked of Elisée Reclus, of Sébastian Faure, of the Italian, Amilcar Cipriani, with whom he had worked. A promulgator of the gospel of bombs, he had travelled widely on esoteric missions, and now that the apostles were dead, and their message diluted in every breast but his own, he still travelled, but from habit and without aim. He nourished his frail body with sausage, dry bread, chocolate, and cigarettes. He wore a black silk cap and looked like a highly spiritual pawnbroker. Who dealt with him received more than he pledged.

Bram pledged an hour or two every evening, telling him of the workmen in the Atlas. In return he got more wisdom than he could assimilate. Morah read aloud to him *An Appeal to the Young*, a moving little brochure by Kropotkin, and articles in old copies of a London anarchistic weekly, *Freedom*, a badly printed sheet to which he sometimes contributed.

Though an anarchist of the deed, he held one or two philosophical notions. One was that industrial machinery would release mankind from most of its chains of drudgery.

"Think of it! Man will become a free individual, and each with a machine will be free to express the unfettered impulse of his soul. The age of primitive handicraft was a bad one. A rotten one, my boy. You look at a certain chair—and if you know anything about chairs, you say: 'Aha, a Russian chair of the seventeenth century.' Or you look at a coat, and if you are a historically minded tailor, as I am, you say: 'Oh, a British riding-coat of the eighteenth century.' What indictments! What a shocking thing! For a hundred years a million hand-working men drudged at making one kind of chair, and another million drudged at making one kind of coat. What a horror! All drudges, fettered to a copy! No changes ever, except after a century. And Ruskin and Morris and all those wailing dreamers want to impose handicraft upon mankind once more. Give every man an engine to diversify a hundredfold the products of his skill."

And the way, so Bram surmised, was by releasing the stupid and proprietorial grip by force. A little blasting gelatine would perform wonders in that respect.

"But in the proper hands, my boy! In the proper hands, mind you, just as the scalpel belongs to the hand of the qualified surgeon. There are botchers

aplenty—and some of them in the midst of you. There's Maximilian Wroblewski, Peter Savic of Buffalo, and I know not what other marplots."

When he got on this tack, he croaked like a disappointed alchemist, rocked in a fit of coughing, and had to restore himself with a glass of whisky heated up with cloves and a pinch of ground celery for sedative.

That month the Socialist William Haywood came to talk in the Trades' Assembly Hall in Atlas City. Zellner grunted in approval. The *Monthly Worker* would benefit by at least two hundred subscriptions. It was not a free talk. That was not the Socialists' way. Give away free tickets, and nobody except themselves would show up. Charge as little as a dime, and you pack the hall. Bram bought three tickets, on principle, and took Morah with him to the hall, which was in the next block. He beheld a man who had a thick neck, enormous hands, the head of an abnormal infant, and a face so swollen, as if from shouting, that the eyes peered through slits. He looked like a champion pork-butcher. His English was not good. He bellowed repetitions about the suffering of the miners in Idaho, and if there were refined ears in the audience, he cared not a hoot for them. Most of the audience cared nothing about the sufferings of miners in Idaho or anywhere else, but they rejoiced in the spectacle of a man who had been spoken of so much in the papers, and who could carry a world of energy inside

him without bursting. If Moyer and Pettibone had appeared with them, they would have paid five dimes.

They ran into Zellner on the way out. "A man of action," commented the master. "Makes the rest of us feel like rabbits. He won't change. He's too convinced the world is going to hell, and something ought to be done about it."

Bram took them both into his room. The tailor was a prodigy that the master should know, and he anticipated hours of godlike conversation. But somehow the two did not hit it off well together. Neither cognac nor all his strategy could start the spark between them, and after all three had twiddled their thumbs in silence, Zellner mumbled a good-night and left. The venerable Jew stuck one tiny cigarette after another in the midst of his white beard, and after he had smoked ten, he smiled benignly, though the glints in his eye were hard and malicious.

"So that was your friend Zellner," he coughed. "Ah, well, well. A neophyte, my boy. Just like the one we listened to. They miss the soul within the machine, the imprisoned soul that only the proper hands may release."

Bram turned in disappointed. The anarch was probably right, but he was too esoteric and rarefied. It might be best to stick to Zellner after all. The master's evangelism might be cruder, but it had fire in it instead of a cold gleam.

"I was disappointed," Bram complained to him in

the morning. "Considering what he was, at least you might have exchanged ideas with him."

Zellner looked not so much thoughtful as uneasy. "It wasn't necessary. He was up and up. There was nothing I could tell him. Some day you will understand."

"Then, hang it, you could have asked him about his travels. He got a lot out of them."

"I doubt it," muttered Zellner, humping himself over his vice and affixing his glass. "Nobody does. Except drummers and elephant-hunters. A waste of time and energy. All the world is under your nose here in the Atlas."

In his erratic way Zellner managed to hit the truth now and then, and perhaps, Bram felt, even more frequently than that. The Atlas, a microcosm, a world in itself, was always with him. No Triton blowing his horn distracted his attention from it. For he himself was a Triton—a swinish sort of Triton, but masterful, acute, and unfailingly curious in all the phenomena and the two-legged manifestations of life that sweated under its roof like fungi in a forcing-bed.

Shop Forty was itself the Atlas, the United States, the industrial civilization, the universe. None of Bram's fellow workers were interested in anything that happened outside of the Atlas boundaries, save what concerned their families, their potato-yards, and their baseball heroes. There were laws past making out, and a government—visible at intervals in a fas-

tidious and handsome general manager who came through with distinguished visitors that carried sticks and had carnations at their lapels. Below that was a cold constellation of technical superintendents. And below that other being who knew nothing except how to hold the desirable jobs and browbeat and jolly those at the bottom of the scale, who ran machines, swung hammers, put things together, and got paid by the hour. These latter were the most interesting of all.

The timekeeper was lenient to all who dropped their checks tardily that morning, and for the rest of the day he was absent. The elections were on. The shop talk was of nothing else, and Coughlan's pool was overflowing. He, too, was gone, with the rest of his pool advisers, for they had been appointed watchers at the polls in the interest of Porson. When Bram got home, he found that Morah was gone. He had "flitted," said the Scotch chambermaid who had to do with the office, and she could add no more but that he had paid his rent and departed with his two grips. Bram walked the streets until the election returns came in. He bought a paper. Somebody with an Irish name had been elected sheriff. He felt pleased.

In the morning he found that Zellner, too, was pleased. Wragg, the timekeeper, was immersed in gloom, and the contagion had spread all over the shop. Porson appeared, a figure of proud resignation, and shook hands with everyone. He had been touched by the support, and, whether from feeling or a sense

of the dramatic, Bram did not know which, he managed to squeeze out a tear that endured throughout the process of hand-shaking. There were two that he did not approach. They were Zellner and Jeens. They had not voted at all.

Porson recovered. In a week the last echo of the elections had died out in the shop, and the sole trace of them was the subterranean chuckles that Zellner gave at the bench. Bram perceived the master watching him critically, but with a smile that was elvish.

"We ought to have a little dinner," he said. "Yes? Lonesome for you now, what with the Messiah gone away. I'll tell Bertha when I get home. Eight o'clock. Take the N car."

Bram was glad at the idea of a change. That evening he scrubbed himself more thoroughly than usual, put on a white shirt, and boarded a car that would take him there not a minute before or after eight. Mrs. Zellner—or whoever Bertha might be—was probably an elderly person who would get cross if the stew had to wait, and who had a low opinion of Atlas individuals, a black-shirted crew whose influence on her man was none of the best. And after she had cleared away the dishes, she would sit apart in the parlour, across from them, with her hands on her lap, yawn at the shop gossip, and at eleven look significantly at the clock. Well, tonight he would depart at ten and keep on the safe side, else he would never be invited to that flat again.

Bram got off the car, walked past a row of bungalows that looked exactly alike, then paused before No. 60 Mount Vue. It was a sort of barn, clapboarded, with an octagonal tower on top. Over the door was a painted sign, "The Monthly Worker." He knocked, and Zellner appeared and ushered him down the passage into a long room at the back. It was a workshop, furnished with a large hand-press, a type-cabinet, and carboys of ink, and a stack of paper done up in blue wrappers. An old sofa yawned in the corner and disembogued lumps of excelsior. They sat on it. Zellner gave him a glass of wine, drank one himself, then marched up and down the room, hands in pockets, and looking about him pridefully. He began talking, in a gruff, mumbling speech. It was some time before he became audible.

"I don't say you can be useful offhand," he was saying. "You are top-heavy yet. Jeens and that crowd. You've got plenty to forget, but you can learn."

He frowned, as if he had certain doubts, and he pondered for a moment. He waved a thick finger about the room. "I don't know why you shouldn't make yourself comfortable here. There's a couch, and there's enough blankets about the house."

Zellner nodded firmly, as if he had long ago made up his mind on that point, and Bram felt that whatever he said just then would be irrelevant. He talked on, and his voice rose and dropped continuously.

"Solidarity of the workers, bound together for a

common end, their economic emancipation. Nothing could be simpler. Call things by their right names, and you do not fool yourself. And when a problem is to be faced, look at it steadily from one view-point, not a half-dozen, but from one angle—the advantage of the working-man."

Thereby it was perfectly plain, society could be reorganized inside of ten years. Zellner, raising his fists in the air and shouting on one key for several minutes, reorganized it from top to bottom. It was impressive, almost hypnotic, and Bram tingled with an electrical warmth from head to foot. Hammers seemed to clang in the fists, and he had a sudden and beatific vision of towers illumined by victory. He had heard such speeches before, a patter declaimed by rote and smoothed by years of ceaseless repetition. But this was more sincere, lyric despite the snarling voice, and wound up with a meaning that was direct and personal.

A door opened at the bottom of some stairs, and it outlined the figure of a girl. She was beautiful, and Bram took in all of her at once, for he could not dare a second glance. Surprising fellow, the master, to have such a daughter.

"Bertha, this is Dartnell, that you have heard me speak of. This, Dartnell, is Bertha Mankowitz."

"How d'you do?" She gave a perfunctory nod. "I heard all this racket, so I came down. You'd both better come up right now."

She led the way to a large room upstairs. Sitting at a round table, covered with a red-and-white checked cloth, with knife and fork upright in his hands, a middle-aged man was awaiting them. He looked imbecilic, but amiable, and when they were seated, he began to eat at once. Smoked herrings, boiled potatoes, and tinned corn were the spread.

"Well, Bertha," said Zellner, pulling off his coat and throwing it over the back of his hard chair, "did you get that column done?" He speared two herrings before she replied.

"All in type, Fritz." She gave the cruet a spin for Zellner's benefit. It was a tall, drunken cruet, with an array of bottles that were none too clean and lacked stoppers or had their lips broken. The master selected one, with the air of a connoisseur, and, thumping its bottom, sent into his dish of corn a flood of pink ketchup. "Ran to a galley and a half, Fritz."

She turned to Bram, holding her cup with both elbows on the table. "It was an article about Haywood and one of his speeches that we had to get into the *Monthly Worker* for this issue," she explained.

"Oh," he murmured.

It gave him a glow of pleasure that she should address him on something that meant deeply to her. Zellner, drinking coffee audibly, wiped his moustache with the back of his hand and took up the points of Haywood's speech. Bram did not hear what he was saying. He was wondering if she were in love with the

engraver, and how deep was her infatuation. And who was the imbecilic man? Hers was the sort of beauty he had always admired without ever having seen. Her long and straight nose met a curled lip that was both hard and sensitive. Her eyes made dark splotches on a face that was creamy and oval. Imperturbable eyes they were, that blinked in thought before she came back at Zellner's ironic comment. She turned to the imbecilic man, who was sitting as detached as if he were a stray bird.

"Give us some music, Cyril. Play that overture they've tacked on to that Egyptian movie. *Zampa*, isn't it? Take the *andante religioso* twice, and close as if the monks were a mile off."

The man limped to a squat piano at the end of the room, smote the keyboard, muffled thunders with the pedal, and was off into a quiet field of sound, a background to thought.

"I was telling Dartnell," Zellner began, "that I couldn't see any reason why he shouldn't have that room to live in." He balanced a spoon on the edge of his cup. "Where d'you think he's living now? In a mission, with a lot of hymn-singing downstairs."

"Nobody's bothering me there," Bram said at once. He was afraid that the stately girl would laugh. She did not, and he was relieved, but it might be as well to change the topic.

"Do you know Mungo Jeens?" he asked.

"Oh, that—man." Her voice trailed off in pity.

"We don't speak of him here, very much," Zellner explained. "Bertha is a direct actionist. They are as far apart in their thinking—if you call Jeens's mental processes thinking, which I do not—as far apart as you can imagine."

"Did he ever subscribe, Fritz?" she asked, lighting a cigarette.

"No. No more would Hat-peg. I cornered him twice, before the election, of course, but he said he would cut his wrists first and let all the blood drain out of his body."

She flicked the match into the fireplace. "That's good. Seeing that nothing is in his arteries except iron dust. He's got no more blood than a pumpkin. Even his brother-in-law couldn't get a drop out of him—and there was a handy ax-man. Do you think Boston Lentz will ever get out?"

"How should anyone know? A victim of environment. All we can do is put down our names. Nobody does it for the Hat-peg, mind you. But just as a matter of habit or to give a hand to the under dog. Boston has become real to us somehow—a sort of damaged and captive spirit that ought to have another chance. I don't know that there are more than three men in all the Atlas that ever saw him. Funny if it turned out that he didn't exist at all! Even if we knew he didn't, we'd keep on signing anyway, because he has become a part of our consciousness and quite as real as the damnable Hat-peg."

"Just like Sub-chairman Voight's little Hans," said Bertha. "He lost him when the child was only three, a white-headed infant buried almost twenty years ago near Düsseldorf. He was telling Comrade Max Wroblewski about him the other day, talked for a whole hour on how bright he was. 'I'd like to see him,' says Comrade Max, and I had to wink and sign to him because Voight suddenly looked so embarrassed."

"But Voight's got brains," said the engraver, looking at Bram. "He's one of us. There's some fine intelligences down to the Atlas, and you've got to know them. Wilhelm Voight, Eric Marshpane—those are only two of them." He paused to push to one side the cups and plates. "Cyril, take this muck away, will you?"

The lame man carried off the dishes, then resumed his playing. The master and Bertha talked about subscriptions and trouble with a new batch of paper, the girl with conviction and Zellner in grumbles. Bram's eyes wandered about the room. It was untidy, the floor littered with cigarette ends and matches, and the light hanging above the table was unshaded. On the walls hung photographs of bearded political thinkers. One entire side was covered with shelves that sagged under the weight of books, all in disorder and bristling with page-markers. The girl turned to him.

"You may find it a little chilly down there, Mr. Dartnell," she said. "The stove-pipe fell down last

week, but tomorrow Cyril will put it up. I'll fix the cot for you. You can either stay up here and read or listen to Cyril. That's a new piece he is practising for the Elite Nickelodeon downtown, and he has yet to get it by ear. We are very proud of him. Good-night."

With that she was gone. Cyril was attacking the sumptuous *andante* once more, and she seemed to flow out of the room to the bright, swinging rhythm wedded to the gait of celebrant monks and vestals. Zellner pushed snuff up his nostrils, then spread out leaves on the soiled table-cloth. The rough, small drawings of tools he flicked aside with his thumb. The notes on political economy he arranged as if they were cards, pored over them as if he expected them to leap together into a design, and sat motionless in contemplation. Bram left him.

He went downstairs. The sofa had been turned into a bed, and he crawled into it. He could still hear the music. The incredible Cyril had looked as if he were going to play until dawn, and the iron Zellner would doubtless keep him company, taking snuff and dreaming over the greasy notes. A mystifying lot. What held them together—a swine-bodied propagandist, an imbecile piano-player, and a girl with eyes like black pools in snow and a voice that was both sweet and guttural? He wondered again if the girl were in love with Zellner. He could understand it if she were, and if she were even his mistress, he would not be surprised. He was beyond surprise now. Then he shivered, because of the cold and the thought.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

He was awakened by Zellner's booming voice and a sound as of someone rapping the table with the butt of a knife. For a moment he pawed the wall sleepily in an effort to find the switch, then gave it up, opened the door wide, and dressed in semi-darkness. It had been a night of heavy frost. The ink had oozed out of the carboys in rods of black ice with corks atop. They appeared to be swans with necks drooping in despair. Overhead the piano commenced again. He wondered as he climbed the stairs whether Cyril had played all night long or was just beginning his morning practice.

Zellner, with overcoat and muffler on, was eating toast at the table and washing it down with gulps of steaming coffee. Cyril was going hard at the keyboard, jerking his head up and down to the raps of the master's knife.

"Come along, Dartnell." The knife waved at him, then pointed to another cup and plate. "You are ten minutes further away from the Atlas than you were in the flop-house. Get that stuff down."

They breakfasted to music, with their breaths coming out in balloons. The master seemed to crackle with vitality, as if the conflict of his blood with the

chill air had generated in him an abounding somatic force.

"Cyril's been warming himself at the piano. He never liked early morning work until I broke him to it. Now he'd sooner bang keys than eat bacon and eggs. Not that we eat that truck here. We are Continental."

"Miss Mankowitz doesn't mind the noise?"

"No, Bertha doesn't mind. Used to anything around here. She doesn't have to be off to the neck-tie shop until eight, and until then she will boss Cyril at the press."

He rose and buttoned his overcoat, and Bram followed him into the street. They descended the hill and joined the stream of workers whose trail was past the gas-works yard. It was Bram's old neighbourhood, and as they passed his father's place, he looked up at the window through which he had once peered down, shivering, on the spate of life of which he was now an integral part. It was still dark, and except under the lamps the procession with its movements and bobbing of heads was like the progress of a reptile crawling through a world still in chaos.

As they went down the aisle, Porson lifted a finger, and they went over. The petition roll was on the desk, and he held out a pen for them to sign it. Zellner put on his spectacles, read the memorial at the head, glanced cautiously over the list of names, then affixed

his signature. Bram did likewise and moved aside as Porson detained the engraver.

"The main office is putting it up to you again, Fritz," were the words he heard whispered. "That head inspector job is a good one, if you ask me. And so is the raise. All you have to do is stamp the 'O.K.' with your stamps instead of just making 'em."

"The answer as usual is 'No.' The less I have to do with you fellows, the better I'll like it."

"The devil take you, Fritz," Porson murmured.

On the stairs up to the gallery Zellner gave a grim chuckle to himself. Bram began to penetrate the secret of the respect that both the workers and the foremen had for the engraver. He moved and had his being in another dimension, but he understood the workings and the arcana of the lesser world in which the others moved. Across Porson's face at the refusal had flickered an expression of hatred and doubt. Each tc the other was anathema. Neither would have stooped to conciliation for personal ends. They were of the strong and bitter natures to whom enmity is more fortifying than friendship.

Whether or not he regarded the offer as a sign that the Hat-peg and all that it implied had suspected a flexibility in his innermost beliefs, Zellner was displeased all morning. Glowering and taciturn, with distrust in his eyes, he sat humped over his bench, tapping at his cannon-ball vice without looking up. His enormous bowed back was a radical point of dis-

satisfaction. The air in the enclosure was surcharged with contrary currents. Schlemmer threw down his tools from nervousness. A number of things went wrong. Zellner tick-ticked with his absurdly tiny chisels and glowered in silence.

"Dartnell," he called suddenly.

Bram shut off his machine and went over to him. The master scratched off an order on a requisition blank.

"Go down to the store-room on the mezzanine floor and get these bolts for Pestov. And tell Voight to come up and see me."

It was a disagreeable commission. Nobody cared to enter that zone presided over by Voight, an important and secretive man, who lived behind a steel-wire partition and moved amid a labyrinth of steel shelves and bins. Bram went down and touched the bell at the door. Voight's head appeared over a steel shelf far to the side. His manners were bad, he kept up an incessant growling like a watch-dog and never went out of his steel cage if he could help it. Nor was anybody known to enter it, except on urgent business, except Porson, who disappeared in there every noon-time to play cribbage with him. More correctly, to fight over the cribbage-board, for the way those two squabbled over the game was notorious.

Bram handed the slip through the opening. Voight regarded it distantly, then stuck a monocle into his eye and deigned to receive it. It was his custom on

taking a requisition slip to snap it between his fingers as if hoping to prove it counterfeit, and then, if it wasn't, to inveigh loudly against somebody's extravagance. The workers understood that, and they tolerated it cheerfully, for as often as not the orders were really counterfeit and signed by themselves. But their real dislike of Voight derived from his custom of making tea over an alcohol heater in his unoccupied moments and sipping the stuff with a book of poetry before him. He was a devotee of Heine. This time, after reading the signature, he merely grunted. Zellner's copper-plate flourish was beyond the skill of anybody else in Shop Forty. He disappeared, then came back with a cardboard box full of parts.

"Mr. Zellner wants to see you," said Bram.

Voight stared at him in contempt. " 'Mister,' you say! Good God! You tell him that I get enough of him one night a month without having to quit my duty when he whistles to me."

"Very well, sir."

Bram conveyed the message to Zellner, who failed to appraise it as an insult. "He'll be here," he murmured. Bram was less hopeful, and when, five minutes later, Voight, presenting the spectacle of himself roaming outside the cage, ambled down to the enclosure, he looked upon him as merely an apparition. At all events, it was portentious.

The best ears of the gang were turned in the direction of the cannon-ball vice. The thirst for esoteric in-

formation in Shop Forty was prodigious, and the two "Dutchmen" were know to be privy to all mysteries and equally well known never to have divulged one. Voight bent down his head. The colloquy was almost inaudible, and Bram could hear but a few sentences.

" . . . put it up to me again this morning, I tell you, and he knows damn well I wouldn't take it for a thousand times the money, with his soul thrown in. Are you sure that's the reason?"

"Well, it's true."

"I heard the talk a week ago."

"It isn't just talk. Philson's quitting. Been inspector for thirty-one years. I know. He got his quarter-century medal six years ago. He's getting along."

"Then there's no spoiled work around? Hat-peg don't think there is?"

"Ach—not him! All efficiency here, I tell you. I get my ears full of that, and nothing else. Got so now that I stick cotton in them before I get out the old cribbage-board."

The rest of the conversation—because two machines became voiceless and silence fell—was in German. Voight departed. The gang, having heard nothing at all, was timorously expecting a flare-up and unhappy little disclosures over some forgotten requisition slip and was relieved when nothing of the sort happened and Zellner communed with himself in visibly better humour. He was still in this vein when Por-

son came hurrying up in mid-afternoon, to consult with him on a machining problem.

The debate was carried on in an offensively polite fashion. The job was to plane the bases on a new kind of bracket that was frail and branching. It defied the usual method of bolting-down to the planer bed, and the last mechanic to try it had broken half a dozen in the experiment and had been mulcted in the sum of two dollars.

"What jackass-brains," Zellner asked, still politely, but in tones loud enough to be heard at the extreme end of the shop, "what main-office gentlemen designed those, and why did he specify them in common iron?"

"That's not the question. Here they are, shoved on to us like a lot of bad eggs, and the assembly gang yelling their heads off for them. Can't you machine them here?"

"We're not equipped to handle production jobs. I've got my men doing artistic work on punch-and-dies. It'll hurt their feelings to have to plane a cart-load of scrap-iron that looks like a bad imitation of elk-horns. They're as temperamental as prima donnas. They're pretty good, as tool-makers, but efficiency makes them awful nervous."

Porson smote the bench with the unfortunate sample, and Zellner, eyeing his cannon-ball vice as if he yearned to be left alone, took snuff.

"What price did you set on them, Hat-peg?"

"Four and three-quarters cents!" the foreman

shouted in exasperation, but wearily. "I'll give your men that price too, on the whole lot."

"Pretty low, pretty low. Don't know anybody that could get by with them on that rate. But Dartnell here might. Dartnell!"

Bram came over.

"Put those through your machine and lay off the bushings for a while. That's another production job I'm sick of. How will you handle them?"

An experiment in efficiency was as stimulating as any adventure. He had a sudden notion, but it wasn't regular, the method that shot into his mind. At least, Porson could not fire him for it.

"I'd strap them to the bed of the miller, build a box about them, then pour in a lot of plaster, with their heads sticking up the right height, and after the plaster had set, mill them off."

Porson was hurt. He emitted language that was both grieved and fantastic, then left. He had enough sense of foremanship to know just when to shift responsibility, and within half an hour the castings, several hundreds of them, were dumped on to the floor of the enclosure. Bram began the grim task. It progressed hopefully. The first lot emerged perfect after a whirring of cutters that sounded like a song of praise. From a distance Porson stared indifferently. It made no difference now what Porson thought, and Bram gave no sign of having perceived him. The engraver had communicated to him a distrust too great

to be overborne. Zellner, at his cannon-ball vice, gazed rapt at a bright stamp he held up with his fingers as if it were a rosary. Somehow the day was ending well.

Bram came home late, for he had to go to the Peniel Mission to get his belongings, and he found the large room buzzing with people. He did not like it. He had discovered that *ménage*. It was a sanctuary, with Bertha Mankowitz as priestess—and Zellner somewhere around. Bertha had on a bright red shawl and she was moving about unflustered as if it were a regular occurrence. She saw him in the doorway and beckoned him over.

"I want you to know Veronica Hammer," she said. "She is quite clever, and she's one of us, even if she is a head clerk in the Atlas main office."

She was a heavy, dark girl with a smooth face and glasses as thick as window-pane. "This your first time here?" she asked, making room for him on the couch.

"At this sort of thing, yes. I live here now."

"Oh. You are very fortunate. Very!" she affirmed, opening a steel-mesh reticule. She took out a cigar and nipped the butt reflectively. "I suppose you know all about economics. You must find life interesting. I do—here. You'll find me here the last Thursday of the month—printing-day—with all the rest of the regulars."

Bram considered the prospect drearily. Miss Hammer spoke to him as if she had taken him in charge. She had the thin and musical voice so many stout

people have. She knew everybody in the room, and she was steadily nodding in salutation.

"You'll get to know them all after a while. Wonderful personalities, most of them. The plump woman over there, that's Madame Michaelis of the Patterson strike committee. The gentleman with the full moustache who is toasting her is Emil Gerhardt, head of the Meat Cutters' Union. Most of the Germans have gone to the Turnverein tonight to see the gymnastics, I guess. I guess Ella's gone, too. You don't know Ella? She's a lady embalmer. Oh, hullo—there's Eric."

Bram looked up as Miss Hammer nudged him.

"He gets the advertisements for the *Monthly Worker*. He's quite gone on Bertha. Can you blame him?"

Bram regarded him with no feeling of approval. He was a pale and youngish man with a French pincenez and a drooping black ribbon. He bowed gravely to the hail of "Comrade Marshpane." He looked neat, precise, conceited, and practical. Not many about him looked quite so practical. Most of them had the knotted brows and distraught expression of Spiritualists. In fact, this might have been a seance of table-rappers with Miss Hammer as the presiding medium.

She removed her cigar and laughed softly. "They're just good friends," she remarked. This annoyed Bram vaguely. She was cleverer than he thought she was.

"I've known Bertha longer than anybody else here," she said. "I was on the committee that dear old

Fritz sent down to the Bowery two years ago to bring up organizers for the knit-goods workers' strike. I ran into her at an Emma Goldman lecture. We all think she's a genius. We're lucky to have her stay on with us like this. And when the big strike comes off, she'll deserve as much credit as anybody."

The door opened, and Wilhelm Voight entered to a chorus of approval. He was carrying two lard-pails full of beer. Bertha began to fill a row of glasses, and Comrade Marshpane handed them out. Bram secured two for himself and Miss Hammer, who swallowed hers straight off. He plied her steadily with the liquid, and she motioned him for a respite. The brew was a heady one, and the scene, after he himself had pledged her a couple of times, became as jumbly as a kaleidoscope.

"Do you go to the show ever?" she asked. "Like vaudeville?"

"I've been once or twice, Veronica."

"I go every Monday night. It's good to do something regular in this rocky, irregular old world. Sort of steadies you. You'll find me up in the nigger heaven with the nickle sack of peanuts."

"It's not so bad up there—if you like vaudeville."

"I like vaudeville. I like low things—the rowdier, the better. They're the only kind I can understand, but sometimes you run into something fine, with an edge to it. Give me fire, or a disturbing beauty or a song with a lilt that warms you up and makes you feel

dreamy. I'm only a fat Finnish girl that goes to the theatre half liquored up and eats peanuts, but I get what is fine. I don't want to go any nearer. It's only distant things that you can love. Keep away from things you love, or they'll hurt you. As soon as you know that a thing is art—"

"It's hard to tell, sometimes."

"No, it isn't. It is what makes life vivid for you. Makes it in colours or sharp black-and-white. And there are people that can do that by just being themselves. There's a sort of twist in them that makes them shine out like candle-flames. People like Bertha and Comrade Max. There's some of it in Fritz. After you've met people like that, life can't give you any more. It can't give you anything. They're upheavers, and after that you can dream always and never stagnate."

Bram gave her polite attention and held out the ash-tray to save her blue frock. She turned to strike off her cigar end; then she caught sight of more who had come in.

"Let's go over. There's Comrade Max Wroblewski. You must meet him. He's very advanced, a deep student and a chemist, but he's now keeping a little bookstore on the hill."

She led him forward to a large arm-chair at the end of the room. The great man loomed through the thick smoke like an ample prelate in a cloud of incense. Bram looked upon him with inward commo-

tion. That man's name he had first heard from the lips of Ezekiel Morah. Veronica introduced them.

"He works with me down to the Atlas," rumbled Zellner.

"Ah, the Atlas. We have fine soldiers down there, and our cause is well served," spoke the celebrity.

He put on gold spectacles, looked at Bram, then put out a hand to be shaken. It was smooth and unhealthily moist, and locks of iron-grey hair were tagged to his brow with sweat. He looked like a vast and dropsical toad. His mouth was agape, as from physical indolence, and his face was animated only by the pale eyes that gleamed between pouchy lids. Then the gleam went, and he was in a self-forgetfulness that lifted him into a region of thought and spirit absolutely above the room and present conditions.

"How, then, would you define it?" asked Wilhelm Voight, resuming an interrupted talk.

Comrade Max descended and opened his eyes. "God is a gaseous invertebrate," he breathed.

Heads nodded in respectful acquiescence, and Bertha spoke, laying a hand on Bram's arm: "Veronica has been telling him what a deep student you are, Comrade Max, and that you know all about books."

His deprecating smile showed that he was not immune from the compliment. It expanded, and, breathing soft words compounded of all gentleness, he extracted from his inside coat-pocket a fistful of papers into which he searched until he found a printed slip.

He gave it to Bram, who retired with Veronica to examine the gift. It was a price-list of books, and he read it over with her, sitting on the couch. There were Ingersoll's *Lectures*, editions of Karl Marx, *Origin of Species*, *The Communist Manifesto*, exposures of Christianity, *Masonry Unmasked*, the complete words of Blavatsky, apocryphal poems by Byron, including "Forbidden Fruit," and *curiosa* even more questionable and expensive.

The crowd departed in twos and threes, and Comrade Max took Veronica home. Zellner went to bed, the girl played solitaire on the table-cloth, and Bram spread out a copy of the *Monthly Worker* and read it through. It was printed on one large double sheet. The text was not light. There were columns of revolutionary economics, stuff copied from old books, an appeal for solidarity to the workers of the Atlas, the Haywood interview, a dull account of the Florentine guilds signed by Eric Marshpane, and paid publicity from local merchants.

The world was suddenly very still. That was because its luminary, Zellner, had gone from it and left no beings in the space except Bram and the girl. She was deep in her game and very distant. He thought of Veronica's words; then he wondered if the distance would ever lessen. How long would it be before he got hurt? Before he ever dared kiss her? Perhaps never. She raised her head.

"I see you've taken an interest in Veronica Hammer," she said.

"We got along very well. I thought she was intelligent."

She looked at him with her head bent forward, listening as if she were less concerned with his words than with his mental reservations. Then she resumed her game, and for the first time he saw her smile.

Down at the shop he had made progress, finished the castings, which the gang had got to hate because of the plaster that whitened everything and stuck to their shoes. In the house, after a month, he had become thoroughly a part of the *ménage*. Composition took up much of his time. It was laborious work for him. He lightened it by the process of transcribing. He pulled out a book at random from the shelves, found something that was intelligible, then rewrote it in simpler language. It was strange how much one could learn in doing that. There was the night he started off with:

"The problem of allaying, if not extirpating, the discontent among the mass of wage workers in urban populations is the Sphinx-like riddle that the Government must answer. Fellow workers, shall we entrust the problem to Œdipus Taft, who, when asked how it should be done, replied with 'God knows'? What is this but a confession of defeat? Let the Klassenkampf go on! Let our cry be the text of the Manifesto: 'Proletarians of all lands, unite!' "

Even in that simplicity a simpler truth revealed itself. Why extirpate discontent? Would not that mean the end of progress? He debated it. Then suppose progress were nothing but illusion, a folly, a dream. . . . He looked at Bertha. Her broad and practical fingers were coursing her pen over reams of paper. He wanted to ask her. But she despised people who were not positive about what they thought.

Once he had asked her: "Why don't you admire Jeens?" And she had replied: "He doesn't know what he believes. He ought to be killed off."

She meant it. She was a woman, but there was steel in her, as much as there was in the master. He bent to his task once more.

"What do the papers say about the miners' strike?" he asked.

"As usual, nothing. The *World* is full of guff about 'Affinity' Earle. They've got Robert Welles Ritchie going strong on it. When they turn word-slingers like that loose on strike news, the millenium will be here. Let's go downstairs. We've got copy enough."

He liked to watch her stand at the case, with the light shining on her black hair and red shawl, and listen to the clicking of the type. It clicked for an hour, then she shunted the tray into the galley rack and lighted a cigarette.

"Well, that's done. The next song will be a dance. Let's go up and see if Fritz has left any beer."

Some nights Zellner was absent, away somewhere

on business. When he was home, he sat in the armchair before the fireplace, taking snuff and clipping items from the radical journals. At times he brooded wordless, staring at the books or at the girl. What was he thinking of at such moments? Was the Cause all, or was Bertha as much, or a little less? He must have been aware that she was a miracle. They had like beliefs, and it was by no accident that she had become his coadjutor in the enterprise that had absorbed all the ardour of his life. For all he knew, Zellner might now be regarding him as an intruder.

There were nights, when no writing was to be done, that he spent elsewhere. Bertha was coming closer to him, and he might be hurt. And Zellner might misinterpret a glance. He went to the Carnegie library and in a quiet alcove read technical books by the hour. The amount of stuff he found in them related to the phenomenon of the Atlas was staggering. It transcended the fussiness of Hat-peggism. It reached into the abstract, into poetry. Mathematics had its beyondness that had always lured him. Its preciseness was merely a discipline that toughened one for the higher flights. He worked with pencil and paper. The Cause was a dream. Comrade Max Wroblewski was a polyp with the brains of a cracker-box atheist. Zellner was a master, but a giant gone introspective. Were they greater than the Atlas? These were rebellious thoughts. He could cope with them. But he could not dismiss thoughts of the nun of the cenacle, Bertha.

They hurt him damnably. Veronica was right, he should have kept himself away. It was too late now, and he had devoted himself to the Cause, and more specifically the strike, which Bertha, with her cool cleverness, was engineering hand in glove with the polyp and the introspect.

Then he would leave the alcove at once, after these cogitations, and walk downtown, generally meeting Trego and Haggertha at a little saloon near the canal. He entered one evening after he had been away from the house for three nights. Trego got up from his table and introduced him proudly to his companions.

"He's ace-high with the big guys, fellows. And he got his start under me, didn't you, Dartnell? Remember the days when you tried to kill off them Polacks?"

They walked out and strolled through the Italian quarter, stopping for a drink at various saloons, then went into a place named the Casino, a rendezvous of preliminary boxers, the sporting element of the Atlas, and bartenders on their nights off. They went over to a table next to one where five or six women sat, arrayed in evening dresses garnished with torn lace. They were being entertained by a pitcher of the Atlas baseball team, who was buying them port-wine.

"Well, look who's here!" shouted Trego. "If it isn't Jackie, the Queen of Sheba."

He reached over and gave her a comradely slap on the back, and it echoed like a shot. The woman arched her arm and rubbed her back, then laughed in a

venereal barytone, but with a warning look in her eyes.

"That stuff will give you a headache, Jackie," he said, with a conciliating nod at the pitcher.

"Who's your young friend?" she asked.

"Oh, you're out of luck if you don't know him. He's Bram Dartnell—son of the great Pete."

"You don't say! They don't make them no better than Pete." She came over to join them and waved to a sidling bartender. "Hank, c'm here. D'you know who this kid is? He's Pete Dartnell's boy."

The bartender drew himself up in military fashion, eased his collar, then thrust out his hand.

"Glad to meet you. He knows me, and so does Rody Madgett. Any time you come here you're welcome, and don't forget to ask for Hank. This round's on me."

He brought over a tray with enough bottles to make two rounds. Jackie proposed the toast, Bram clinked her glass in response, and she rumbled small talk with a languor and lifted eyebrows in easy simulation of a dowager in the upper circles. A fatigued pianist in the corner kept on playing a tin-panny waltz and yawned. Jackie was familiar with renowned men, notables of the Atlas. Sometimes, she averred, they came to the Casino, and she divulged the tastes of each in the matter of liquor.

"You'd be really surprised what a lotta of high-class stuff there is down cellar," said Jackie. "Hank's

got some good brands. You can't name no imported drinks, no champagne that ladies and gentlemen would like, that he hasn't got down there."

"Down there's a good place to keep it," observed Trego. "And what's wrong with this beer, huh? Here's another round of the kind of champagne that common low mechanics drinks—all hops and no grapes. That right, Dartnell?"

"Dear me," said Jackie, loftily. "I thought sure you gentlemen was foremen. They come here and find this place very select."

"Drink with them, Jackie, while the drinking's good. If there was a strike, I don't know what would happen around here."

"A strike? Not much, old dearie. That's just a lot of talk by some foreigners. They never come in here, thank God. Give me Americans every time. They're good enough for me. I'm for the Americans and the Atlas, and there's not a single foreigner there that's any good."

The two men paid back in turn the compliment of the Casino and, after escorting Jackie back to the pitcher's table, went out. They stopped at the corner, and Trego shook Bram's hand elaborately.

"I knew you'd get along, Dartnell. But there's something got into you, though there's nobody could have a better time. Hand it to you on a tray, that's what they do. I never knew nobody that had it so easy."

At the house he took care in unlocking the door, and he entered his room quietly. He had hardly removed his coat before there was a tap, and the inner door opened. Bertha stood there framed in light, as she had been the first time he saw her. How could she have heard him come in? Her sudden presence was like a reproach.

"I thought I'd drop down to say good-night. Is everything all right with you?"

"Everything, thank you." He laughed. "I'm perfectly safe."

"Good-night," she said, and closed the door.

She made no further remark on his absences. Zellner made none at all, neither in the house nor in the shop.

CHAPTER TWELVE

BRAM leaned over the rail and idly watched the streams of men from adjacent buildings hurry through the shop, below the gallery, and pour into the avenue of the plant. They were Lilliputians, grimy from the iron-foundry, whitened at the porcelain kilns, taking the shortest way out to rejoice in a release at Saturday noon and the triumph of spring. He was solitary in the upper regions, except for a craneman high up above the main floor, a celestial operator who had knocked off to eat a sandwich, peer down mildly, and listen to the voices that came up to him like the thin note of insects.

A sunbeam, glittering with dust particles, slanted from the glass roof like a saint's ladder, and its foot rested on a pool of oil iridescent on the iron floor and ringed with sawdust and soppy burlap. An Italian sweeper picked up a crow-bar. It was a Lilliputian brandishing a needle, then hurling it from him. It dropped on a steel disc, and a wave of tunable Æolian chromatics surged through the shop and echoed in the sonorous beauty of thorough-bass. Then the Italian, cocking his hat, trundled off a wheelbarrow with swaggering indolence. The shop was beautiful that afternoon. Jeens was more nearly right than Zellner.

The shop could be beautiful at times, like a cathedral. Overhead, where the snow still lay in blankets, Bram could pick out in the obscurity the interlacing of girders and riveted braces, and his eye descended to take in the falling of steel columns that galleried in tier upon tier.

The impure note in this visual symphony was the Hat-peg. There he was, down on the iron floor, looking at an engine. Looking for trouble, was he? Well, he would find it. Four-cylinder, triple-expansion marine engines, being navy jobs, were always productive of trouble. Sour-faced agents from Washington, very superior to the Atlas, made life a nightmare for the foremen concerned. Cut a steam-gasket an eighth of an inch loose, and they screamed as if pierced in the vitals. They even waylaid Council Banks and induced in him gastric attacks over the matter of a nickel slip in the cost-sheets. Porson got the brunt of it, but he throve, apparently, finding sadistic outlet in superb wrangles with the Government.

Marshpane came along with a book under his arm, and he and Porson engaged in controversy. He was the accountant of Shop Forty and set the piece-work rates on all operations. A mathematician, he brought science to it, plotting up-and-down lines on charts as if his method were based on the theory of fevers. The two disappeared in the direction of the stairs. They reappeared in the gallery, still arguing. Marshpane, who had a squeaky voice and who wore an ab-

normally small green velvet hat, always seemed to be losing arguments. Near the enclosure they stopped to indulge in final retorts.

"Cut that turning job another cent, and you'll have hell busting open on you. The fellows won't stand for it."

"They will stand for it. Stand for anything—from me."

"Let me free you from one delusion, Porson."

"De—lu—sion!"

"They're tired of you here. Do you know that? They've made up their minds you are unfair, a driver, a price-cutter, a steam-calliope and a general damn nuisance. They all voted for you, didn't they? And why? Because every mother's son ached to boot you out of Shop Forty and the Atlas for ever."

Bram listened to the revelation in a glow of pleasure. He disliked Marshpane because he was in love with Bertha, but there was a spark in the man that made him worthy of affection. His voice rose again.

"Zellner didn't, nor did Jeens. They're square-shooters in the first place, and again they'd rather not bother at all with you. If you like, ask them what they think about the cut. They'll tell you. I say, don't do it. But you don't have to forget you have the last word in this shop—except Banks."

That was the end of the talk; Marshpane came into the enclosure, and Porson retired, with reflective tread.

"Sorry I was late, Dartnell. I had to talk with the Hat-peg. Let's go out to lunch."

They went out into the yard and entered a quick-lunch shack known as the Dog-House because the specialty eaten in its greasy interior was frankfurters. They dined and conversed in discreetly low tones, for the shack was filled with overtime workers and foremen. Marshpane gave him the book. It was Chordal's *Letters*. Jeens had recommended it to Bram as something valuable, but he could unearth a copy nowhere until he had spoken of it to Marshpane at the house the night before. It was a classic of the mechanics of the past generation, and still the only literary bloom that had sprung up in unrecorded centuries of machine-shop practice.

"My womenfolk are out for the afternoon," said Marshpane. "If you're not doing anything in particular, you might come up to my place. Comrade Max Wroblewski may drop in later."

It was just as well to know the man better, so Bram assented. They walked up to Marshpane's dwelling, three or four blocks away from Zellner's house. It was a flat above a German grocery. Just as the accountant fumbled for his key, the door jerked open with a buzzing. Evidently the womenfolk had returned and seen him from the bay-window. A severe and elderly Mrs. Marshpane greeted her son at the head of the stairs with a fierce embrace. There was a wan Miss Marshpane working at a sewing-basket, who was

almost as demonstrative. Neither showed any approval of Bram when he was introduced, and as their favourite ushered him into his private room, they seemed faintly protesting. How, Bram wondered, would they receive that other more forbidding guest, the polypus Wroblewski?

"We live very close here, Dartnell," his host explained. "A most domestic life. Take that rocker. You'll find a pipe on the rack there."

Marshpane sank into a wicker chair and absently surveyed his table, as if waiting for an inspiration as to how to entertain a guest. It was covered with blueprints and drawing-tools, a slide-rule, books of calculation, and odd machine-parts.

"Tobacco," he murmured, pushing over a box. "Know anything about skulls?" He pointed to a shelf which had a row of yellow crania on it, between volumes on anthropology. "Nice amusement, that. I used to go in for it until a couple of years ago, when I gave up bothering with the outside of skulls, the facial index and occipital angle, to find out what happened inside of them. Social psychology, that's more interesting still."

"Ugly things. Atlas specimens, I suppose? Everything is Atlas. You can't get away from it."

"Oh, no. Just Indian skulls. There was an old Indian graveyard near where I used to spend my vacations, and it didn't take much digging to get a sackful of those hat-racks. Won't you have a little drink?"

He opened a locked cupboard, took out a bottle, and poured out two small drinks, and after they were swallowed, replaced the glassware with equal noiselessness.

After that, he sat down, listened to Bram talk, nodded and gave perplexed smiles in response. Bram thought that for a man that had studied with some latitude and intenseness, he knew extremely little about the world. The shop was the one tangibility he appeared sure of. Give him something to measure, crania or cams, say, and he knew where he was. After an hour, when the topics were pinching out, the door opened and Comrade Max Wroblewski pushed himself into the room. He almost filled it, even when he had eased himself, with a beatific smile, into a constraining arm-chair.

"I've just been doing some dirty work, Comrade Max," said Marshpane. "I've drawn up a set of lower prices on all base parts of the new four-cylinder marines. The rest to follow. I expect fireworks to happen any time."

The Pole's smile vanished, and he shook his head dubiously as he spread out a handkerchief upon his capacious lap and rested a tiny silver snuff-box upon it.

"Have to be careful," he breathed. "Careful is the word. We're not ready for fireworks yet. United Workers wouldn't like anything like that."

"I know. But I've got Porson to agree to change

the design of the parts, and since they won't be quite the same thing, the cut won't come so hard on the fellows."

"*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*," the Pole murmured to himself. "That's a little better, and it'll hold the boys back two, three months, maybe?"

"About that. I'm on the right side, but the fellows won't believe it. 'The Price-Butcher' they call me. One of the air-hammer gang threw a nut at me last week and almost knocked my hat off. I don't blame him. Somebody ought to be done up for cutting their prices, and I suppose I've got to be the scapegoat until the picnic starts. Between you and me, I'd sooner dig ditches than keep this up any more. I would, hang it, if I didn't have"—he lowered his voice—"the women to look after."

"You don't have to try to square yourself," said Comrade Max Wroblewski, with internal fervour. "There's the *Monthly Worker* to set them straight. Those articles on the Florentine guilds, all signed proper, let the world know where you stand, Marshpane. That's why I got you started on them. They read those articles and they say: 'He's on the right side, that thinker.' And what more can you ask?"

"There's enough for two more," said the relieved accountant. "More stuff in the encyclopædia I can work up. That should carry me up to the time of the strike."

The Pole lifted an eyebrow in hesitancy, then rubbed his cheek.

"They're educational, Marshpane," he breathed in his low, hoarse voice. "They're very educational and contribute to the diffusion of knowledge among the proletariate. Whether they understand them or not is a different question entirely. But the fact is, you've done enough hard brain work for us. What you want is more fresh air. Walk more and get some advertisements for us. You'll get your commission—and you can buy your mother a little piece of fur, one of them mink wraps."

Marshpane shrugged, and the large dreamer tapped the snuff-box with his nails and began to enumerate.

"Two—three—four columns is what we can stand. A bright young man with a business head can fill them in his spare moments and get fresh air for himself and some fur for his mother or sister.

"Who should come in? Well, there's Levinson, who has a book-shop in the Arcade; the two matzos bakeries; Hagemann and Schneider, the sausage wholesalers; Topfer of the gymnastic good store—and he's a dumbbell if he don't come in; and the liquor dealers, Farkas, Horvath, and Bolvic, and the Eagle Bar. Then you should go to the business college, that Newark school, and get an advertisement. And that flag-shop, next to where Bertha works—"

"Flags! Flags, you say, Comrade Max? That would be like taking blood-money. Zellner would not stand

for that. He's liberal, but he would draw the line there."

The Pole closed his eyes, and shook his head in placid negation.

"Zellner, he may be the editor, but I am the treasurer. To reject that money, I say, is a foolishness. Who reads the *Monthly Worker*? Only those that are emancipated, and the advertisement won't harm them. Do they wish to buy David Bernisky's flags, the symbols of capitalism? Again, no. The red ones? Perhaps."

Marshpane smiled uneasily. Ten years of sitting atop a stool in the office had made him prefer a more sedentary leisure. He protested that he walked enough, but the clammy bulk and the logic of Comrade Max Wroblewski overbore his protests and he succumbed. That done, the Pole rocked in his chair, chewed cardamom seeds, and cast a ruminative eye into space. He folded up his handkerchief, stowed it, and after shaking hands ornately with the two, departed.

The accountant failed to recover his spirits, and he sat on the edge of the chair in uncompanionable mood. A prosaic, home-keeping man, domineered by women and without fancy; his imagination had been seized by the one idea to which it was vulnerable: the overthrow of the social fabric. He worked for the consummation of that overthrow. Already the hosannas of a triumphant revolution sounded in his ears. A zealous convert, he performed his share of drudgery

cheerfully. But to tramp from door to door and force further concessions of advertising from unwilling matzos bakers was a prospect that made him unhappy. He lifted his head.

"That's a sort of thing that has to be done, I suppose. Comrade Max ought to work off his paunch doing some of it himself. He's a remarkable man, Dartnell, and one of the pragmatic minds of the United Workers. He advises on means and ways. Usually he talks with more fire, but he's got Veronica Hammer on his mind just now."

"He seems too astral to take any interest in woman. You'd think he lived up in the clouds somewhere, like a disembodied pasha."

"Oh." Marshpane rubbed his head irritably. "He gets along with them, better than you and me. Anyway, they get married next week. Veronica is a good sort. I owe a lot to her. If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't have met Miss Mankowitz and got into this way of thinking."

He found that it was after six when he left. He went home, but the house was empty, startlingly empty. Bertha had presumably gone out to spend the evening with Veronica. He made himself a sandwich, then hurried downtown to meet Trego, encountered him in the canal-side saloon at half past seven, and they paraded the street together. The drinking-places were bursting with light and strenuous noise. It was pay-day, and even citizens who lived far out in the

chicken-raising districts had come in to cash their cheques. What really accounted for the multitude was that a notable was in town. Kid Glasner, the boxer, was in Atlas City. This was the general belief, though in the shop there were sceptics who pooh-poohed the story, even though the papers had it so. But the sceptics themselves were in the mob, and their scoffing did no more than intensify the curiosity in the man who had already acquired half-legendary proportions. The report was that he had come to sojourn a few days on his way to the races at Saratoga. So the bars at the more expensive hotels were thronged with flattered citizens and the sporting gentry, both professional and lay, eager for a glimpse at the prodigy who had won a draw with the late Stanley Ketchel three years before. Bram and Trego wormed their way up and down, encountering shop acquaintances, treating and being treated. At intervals they saw Porson and Wragg, the timekeeper, expectant, and dressed in Melton overcoats and Ascot ties.

"Hat-peg looks grand," remarked Trego. "Too grand to give us the high sign. As for Rags—say, when he visits his home in West Chazy, the folks thinks he owns the whole Atlas and they call out the band."

Peter Dartnell confronted them. He was grave and alert, but with a brightness in his eye that signified he had something up his sleeve.

"You're just in time, Bram," he said, shaking his

hand. "I want you to come up to the house tonight. A little supper and some old friends. Ah, Trego, you say? Pleased to meet you. Seen you at the mains a few times. I hope you'll come along?"

They proceeded to a hotel where a dense crowd squirmed in the lobby, stood on chairs and on the window-sill, and endeavoured to wriggle to the choicest stands, which were near the elevator. The stairway was graced with high officials of the Atlas, who looked down with Olympian humour on the lesser mortals below. Evidently Kid Glasner was on the verge of appearing.

"Yes, sir," Bram heard some one say, as he followed Peter, who was fighting his way to the elevator, "I remember him when he was a kid down to our shop, and I saw him in his try-out at the punch-press operators' smoker five years ago. 'There's a comer,' I said. Nobody can fool me when it comes to—"

"Must 'a' been somebody else that fooled you," laughed another. "The kid never worked in the Atlas nor at nothing except panhandling."

"Gangway!" Peter called out genially. He brushed past Porson and Wragg, opened the elevator door, and with his two followers went up. On the third floor they entered a room that was steaming and full of smoke. Shouts greeted them, and Bram made out several figures in shirt-sleeves lolling about in deep chairs. A bar had been improvised at the bureau, which was covered with bottles, and a man in a fez,

with a towel for apron, was mixing cocktails with spectacular energy. The others were puffing cigars and aiming at cuspidors.

"Kid," said Peter, "I want you to meet my boy."

A young man sitting on the bed got up. He was tall and full-chested, with sympathetic eyes, a thickened ear, and a scar on his cheek-bone. He was divested to his shirt and wore red suspenders, shirred sleeve-garters, and a wide leather belt.

"Didn't know you had a kid, Pete. Wha's he do—scrap like his ol' man?"

He hitched up his belt and gave Bram a clasp that was friendly and delicate.

"No, he don't travel with us much. Scrapping's out of his line. Mebbe's got too much brains, Kid. He's in with the Socialist crowd."

"Whad'ya think o' that!" said the fighter blankly. "They was two of them on a smoker I was in that pulled out of Kansas City. They wasn't nobody could savvy them talking. I think they was some kind of socialists. Say, Phil"—he turned to the man in the fez—"remember those highbrow eggs we listened to out of Kansas City? We couldn't savvy them, huh?"

"Well, Kid," Peter conjectured, "some thinks one way and some another, I guess."

"Whad'ya think o' that!" the fighter repeated, still pumping Bram's hand. "Better ring for some more ice, Phil. They's good men here that's got a thirst."

There was plenty of free, profane, and jovial talk,

reminiscential of drinking-parties staged in hotel rooms all over the country. Then it took on a professional tinge. Kid Griffo—the Harlem Coffee-Cooler—the arrest of Pedlar Palmer in England—the hand-pickling methods of Bob Fitzsimmons—what Sullivan said to Corbett at a chance meeting outside the ring—the opinion of Stanley Ketchel held by the Western critic Richard Prosser. Peter's voice bore in authoritatively and all listened. Trego, glass in hand, and half hidden in the farther corner, gave reverent ear to words uttered by the great and of the great. Peter threw up the window, leaned out, and whistled. A carriage pulled up at the curb with a grinding of the near wheel.

"Time to come along, Kid."

Then the four descended into the lobby. Peter went first, and the fighter, like a playful giant, pushed them from the rear, grinning and ducking his head to the cheering roars that greeted him. Flattened in the packed doorway, but rewarded by a glimpse of the hero, were Porson and Wragg. Glasner pushed Bram past their drawn-in stomachs and forced the barricade at the door; they entered the carriage. The dining-room at Dartnell's was hung with garlands, and the table was hidden under flowers and plate.

"Mr. Glasner, Mr. Trego, and Bram—meet Mrs. Dartnell," Peter was saying.

With sounds of felicitation and surprise they gave her greeting. Some of the guests were of great local

fame; for they included Fryer, the dog-show referee; a police-court judge distinguished for his wit and white felt hats; and Porreca, an Italian politician and the Warwick of the gas-house district, who was renowned as the best amateur chef in town, and who had insisted on preparing the salad and the paste with his own hands. The feast began noisily at once. Olga, who had achieved a pretty bloom by a not too obvious use of cosmetics, was radiant at the head of the table, where she sat with Peter's arm about her. Rody Madgett, the toast-master, directed at them his glass and bluff humour. For an eternity, Bram thought. When it was so late that the guests were half-seas-over, he contrived an excuse and left.

It was as he had expected. Bertha was there, alone. Bending over the table, with a book propped before her, she must have been writing all evening. She did not hear him come in, and he stood in the doorway and watched her pen drive steadily across paper. That figure, with black hair loosened and caught in a silver clasp over a red shawl, was the one steadfast point in a whirlpool of meaningless events. The compulsion that forced her to these endeavours was irresistably strong, as strong as the force that drew him to her. After some minutes her head lifted slightly; then she turned over a page of the book and smiled.

"How did you know I was expecting you?" she said. She looked pallid, her eyes hungry and alert. "But the whistle has already blown."

"Oh, there was a wedding-dinner."

"Weddings—how funny! Who now?"

"My father, and the Polish dish-washer at the hotel. Well, it's all right. They'll be happier than you'd think."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

In the enclosure was a new man. It was little Pestov, who had come in at half past six intent on finding solitude for himself and his newspaper, who had discovered him and retreated at once to watch him from a distance and keep an eye on the tool-boxes. The mystery was not how he had got there, but how he had got into the Atlas at all. He stood like a tree, and he was covered from head to foot with an extraordinary apron of blue-and-white bed-ticking. No self-respecting mechanic—certainly not in the enclosure—would have worn such an apron; and no mechanic could have had such hands, which were as big as mallets and hung simian-wise at the sides. He had a broken nose, and a bristly pompadour crowned a parchment-grey face that would have been dismaying had it not been for the eyes, as innocent as a child's, that looked wonderingly upon the tool-makers as they came in one by one.

They endeavoured to master their surprise by whistling as they put on their aprons, and hailed each other with exaggerated jocularity. Usually they were more skilful in masking their faces in the presence of a Johnny Newcome, whose standing with the foreman and rate of pay had yet to be ascertained. Zell-

ner walked towards him, then, catching sight of the great hands, turned and went back to his vice.

"Whose baby is that?" Schlemmer murmured to Bram. "Look at the maulies on him. I shouldn't be s'prised if he were a ladies' watch-maker."

Porson came up briskly after the whistle had blown, and, gesturing to Bram and the master, beckoned them over to the stranger.

"Dartnell, Zellner—meet Boston Lentz. He's going to work here with you fellows. Dartnell, you show him how to file the whiskers off that barrel of castings."

Bram lifted and dropped Boston's heavy fist, then explained the task to him while Porson stood by. The pupil listened like a tractable child and after an hour was left to himself. He began to file castings with a vengeance, driving a large and coarse rasp that made groanings equivalent to thunder. Under the onslaughts of his immense hairy arms the vice rocked and the bolts loosened, and the shower of dust covered his face and hair. The vicinity of such unleashed force, and the recollection of its homicidal prowess, filled the others with discomfort, and even Zellner turned about to peer over his glasses at such a mighty display of human energy.

Boston's identity established, the men were inclined to be indulgent. They made no further comment on the extraordinary apron. They offered him tobacco, and they shook hands with him to put him

at his ease, with quite the contrary effect. That they were chosen to be his neighbours gave them gratification. It became their privilege to speak with authority on Boston Lentz and to assert that instead of being a legend he was flesh and blood. After Wragg had come over to ingratiate himself with the lion, and Coughlan had lumbered up the stairs to see and talk with him, and after the curiosity of the workers all over the shop—and some from outlying shops—had been sated, Boston became regarded as an impersonal fixture. He spoke to nobody except Bram and Haggertha. The lathe-hand understood him much as a simple and unaffected nature understands a dog. The two became inseparable when they were not working. They ate their lunch together, usually outside on the banks of the channel. They went fishing, and as often as not Boston was a guest on board the *Shop Boy* during its evening and holiday cruises.

"How's he doing, Dartnell?" Porson asked at times, coming on purpose into the enclosure.

"All right."

The colloquies with the Hat-peg were no more than that, but Zellner made no secret of his displeasure over them. He regarded them as *rapprochements* with the enemy, subversive of the discipline he had inculcated in his disciple. This filled Bram with annoyance, and it deepened as time went on. He had already served most of his apprenticeship. He was as class-conscious as any of the others, and in some

respects as good a workman. A skill in the manipulation of all machine-tools, and a knack with file, hammer, and chisel—these were his. He reflected sometimes that in all these the workers were adept. They were just the routine tricks a man had to know to hold his job. What he had next to acquire was more important still—the mental attitude. It was a quality that only some of the older men possessed. Zellner was one. It was to be observed in the crafty sparkle in his eyes, the while his face went grim and deprecatory, when he turned in his black fingers a finished letter. He was a capable mechanic of all-around talent. The paradox was that Haggertha, who also possessed it, was not an all-around, or even a clever, mechanic. True, he was the ablest lathe-hand the men of the shop had ever known. He drove his cutting-tools until they seemed within one degree of melting, and his finishing cut polished the work until it shone like glass. He scorned emery-paper. He could do nothing else but lathe work. Illiterate, he was incapable of reading the figures on a scale. There were three or four mechanics at the far end of the shop in whose learning he had implicit trust, and it was these who would indicate to him the exact measurement. With his thumbnail set to the line on the scale, and his eyes glued hypnotically on that thumb, he walked back slowly to the machine, like the water-carrier in the *Arabian Nights* tale who was followed by the slave with uplifted scimitar. Haggertha was enam-

oured of perfection, and to him a polished surface was more than music. He tested the finish of his plunger-rods by rubbing them against his cheek. Like Zellner, he dreamed at his work, but had a cynical eye that bore through the fog and remained fixed on what was wanted until it was done. Haggertha also had a deep-rooted dislike of foremen, and his custom of dreamily spitting tobacco-juice on their boots whenever they came within range endeared him to his fellow workers.

In a way Marshpane, too, had that spark. But he was gone. Only a week before, Bram went up to his house to return Chordal's *Letters*, and old Mrs. Marshpane, after snatching it from him, slammed the door in his face. He reported it to Bertha when he got home.

"You might have known what happened," she said, with an amused smile. "Leave it to Hat-peg to get rid of those he doesn't want around the shop. Marshpane went to Rochester last week to get a new job. Queer you don't see the half of what's going on."

She did not appear very sympathetic. He had believed she was in love with him.

"He was a good worker, Bertha."

She lifted her eyebrows. "Over-zealous. A number of the younger ones are. We have to look to those like Fritz and Comrade Max and Wilhelm Voight for judgment. Just think of being so careless a month before we are ready for the strike!"

SACRAMENTO STATE COLLEGE

Yes, that was foolish. He was glad that the shop gossip had not absorbed much of his attention, for he might have said something or another and exposed his hand. Wragg and the clerks had wide-open ears and looked full into a man's face when he spoke these days.

Comrade Max Wroblewski and Veronica were married. The *Monthly Worker* carried a whole page on the happy event. And that night they were to give a party to Zellner's group. Bram, Bertha, and Zellner, carrying a cold goose, some tarts, and a jug of apricot brandy, went up to the book-shop at seven o'clock. Bram hardly knew the place, for the windows had been washed and clean curtains hung up. The door opened with the ping and jangle of a bell, and they passed through a *portière* into the room, which had been cleared, with the chairs pushed against the bookshelves. Veronica hugged Bertha to her aproned bosom.

"Well, you went and got it done," said Zellner, shaking the Pole by the hand. "You've got a way with the ladies, Max, as I've always warned them."

"You're next, Fritz. What you ought to have is a woman that makes you toe the mark, put your suspenders up, and pull your coat on every time the bell rings." The Pole was almost oozing out of a frock-coat that had once been blacker and that hinted of more formal and mysterious days. He spread out his dumpy hands in mock despair.

"The best thing in the world for you, Comrade Max," said Bertha, kissing him on the cheek. "You're a big rough bear that has forgotten how to behave properly."

Incessantly the bell pinged. The room filled with guests. There were Jeens, scrubbed and formal; Trego, Wilhelm Voight, and two or three more from the shop, unrecognizable in their best clothes. Zellner, who was the reception committee, greeted them with his pet witticism: "What are you going to do for Sunday?" There were women friends of Veronica's, two or three strangers whose names, though they meant nothing to Bram, the Pole disclosed in whispers; a sprinkling of men from other shops in the Atlas, and all the heads of the United Workers. At two o'clock, when the party should be over, a secret meeting was to be held.

Trego and Bram, under Bertha's generalship, laid out shutters on a pair of trestles brought in from the back yard, and on the improvised table, covered with cloth, were laid the cold goose, sausages, sauerkraut with caraway seeds, Westphalia ham, pigs' knuckles, gingerbread, and bottles of beer and kirsch. Zellner clapped his hands in signal, after glasses had been passed around.

"Comrades, a toast! A special health, please, and long happiness to the Romeo from Cracow and his Juliet! May their progeny live to see the triumph of

the Cause to which their noble parents have concentrated their lives!"

The sentiment was received with uproarious shouts, poundings on the back and a charivari in the kitchen. It called for successive rounds of kirsch and Swedish punch. After this prelude to the feast and a ceremonial march around the room, Comrade Max Wroblewski, groggy and smiling with the vague and endearing candour of an infant, was enthroned at the head of the table and propped up with cushions. While everybody else talked, he ate with sombre voracity, gnawing drumsticks, forcing himself untidily with sauerkraut and pausing only to drink and wipe off the drippings on his vest. Glutted, he sank back to gaze upon his admirers with the dull eyes of a sated boar, but still not too slothful to pat the hands of Bertha and Veronica, who were seated on either side of him.

"Big bear!" said Bertha, smiling up at him. Veronica also smiled at him, shaking her head in feigned reproach, as if entreating him to release all infatuated women from the spell in which he had unwittingly held them.

The door-bell jangled and in came a troupe of men, some carrying accordions and fiddles. The musicians had come. The table was dismantled and the chairs drawn into rows. Kegs of beer were rolled in from the back. The quartet of the Kosciusko Club began the music with a minor choral that was dolorous in

the extreme. Comrade Max Wroblewski clapped his hands in slow time and was apparently the only one except the gleemen themselves who seemed to enjoy it, though the entire company applauded.

"There's nobody in the world can sing like those fellows from Poland," he breathed hoarsely to Bram.

"I don't know that they're any better than people from anywhere else," Zellner remarked, filling his pipe. "You hear some that's pretty good up to the Turnverein on Wednesday nights. But the boys in our shop are the best there are in the Atlas."

"When it comes to singing," argued one of them, "what's wrong with the paint-mixing shop, with Green-Stripes McCarthy and Tommy Ludmiller, that can sing like a house afire? You heard them at the Moulders' Benefit blow-out last February, didn't you? Well, Banks was there, and he said they had ought to be in vaudeville."

"That was because they couldn't mix paints good enough to suit him," said Trego.

The basso of the quartet, a robust Lithuanian who was head ladleman in the iron-foundry, tugged at his straw-like moustache and looked aggrieved. "If anybody wants to know, the best singers in the Atlas all works in the foundry—and that means everyone of the thirty-five singers of the Kosciusko Club. Anybody wants to know anything more?"

"When the Kosciusko boys have their throats wet with beer and sing 'Where Are You Going, My Pretty

Maid' or 'Workers, Rise,' " said Zellner tactfully, "they are the best singers, not only in the Atlas, but in all the United States. And what's more, they'll prove it."

The quartet, mollified and filled with beer, yielded up its voice again and perspired itself into good humour and compliance with loud requests for encores. Comrade Max Wroblewski joined in the chorus, then removed his coat, despite Veronica's struggles to keep it on his back.

"Now for those accordions. Here's five of them in the room, and they can make more noise than ten brass bands with fifty drums. Give us some dance music!"

The accordionists likewise shed their coats, and the floor was cleared. Comrade Max Wroblewski began to hop. "If you don't dance, this will make gruel of your marrowbones," he shouted. He seized Veronica and they led the polonaise. The others wove in. Bram did not care to dance, and he sat down to watch. The musicians, with kerchiefs tucked into the necks, and their shirts wet with perspiration, dinned varieties of multisonous clangour into their ears. There were quadrilles, marches, gavottes; "The Atlas Schottische," composed by a local professor; a weltering potpourri of "The Blue Danube" and "Alice, Where Art Thou?" and "Arrah Wanna." The accordionists were muscular men, athletes from the iron-foundry, with arms as thick as their thighs and inured to hours of

steady playing at weddings and dances. One crouched to support on his knee an immense bellow-box that vibrated and moaned gnawingly like a bass-viol.

The accordions swung into the second and fast movement of a Croatian czardas. The bystanders yipped and thudded time with their heels. The women, to shouts, laughter, and encouragement, pulled down their stockings to their ankles and stamped and whirled in the peasant dance. Zellner, a solemn and confused behemoth in a whirlpool of laughing waters, clumped valiantly, and Bertha, with her ivory-pale face resting on his chest, manœuvred him swiftly with graceful and impetuous bracings of her creamy legs. Through the dust that she smartly clapped up from the floor, Bram could see the flexing of her muscles, the globules of moisture, and the bluish veining behind her knees.

He turned for air. He pushed through the *portière* and opened the door. A figure that had been standing in the entrance, as if drawn by the sound of merriment, hurried away into the fog. He saw, without interest, that it was Wragg, the timekeeper. Leaning against the jamb, he breathed deeply. The music died, and he felt himself pulled by the collar. He turned about. It was Bertha.

"You won't dance with me?" she whispered. "You don't care for me at all. I know that is why."

"No, that is not the reason. You should know that."

Her eyes were glowing under her tangled hair, and

as she pressed against him, he could feel the beat of her heart.

"Then it is very foolish of you. After the meeting you will take me home?"

"No. I had better not take you home."

She withdrew, disappearing through the curtain backward, with her head bent in an attitude of mockery. The music began again, and the floor rocked under the clumping of the dancers. She had gone back into the arms of the master. He could have kissed her. She was a woman and superior to small loyalties. He found his cap and left.

He passed a man who was standing at the upper corner, looking in the opposite direction, into the blankness of fog. It was indubitably Wragg, the timekeeper. What did he want? He went home, threw himself upon his cot, and stared at the ceiling. What a night! He resolved, after some hours, that he had gained more than he had lost.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THEY were waiting for the return of the committee. They had both of them preferred to spend a companionable evening in the print-shop instead of going to the hall with the others. It might be the last time in weeks, in months. The meeting that night, while the last one and formally decisive, could offer them no element of surprise. Outwardly it would be dramatic. Comrade Max Wroblewski, twiddling his pudgy thumbs behind the table and blowing out his cheeks like Æolus, would suffuse it with the requisite fever. Zellner's speech calling for standing votes had been rehearsed to a precise formula for the evoking of yells. The gavel in the strong hand of Wilhelm Voight would drop with a total of seven detonations on the mahogany slab. But there would be no surprise. The inner council had performed its work too competently for that.

So here they were in the print-shop, sitting together and hardly talking, for of late they had curiously little need of words. He knew, even when he was not looking, that the girl's eyes were fixed on him in full wonderment. The distance between them had shrunk to nothingness. But he had not been hurt, except in so far that love itself was a pain. It was disillusion,

Veronica had meant, that hurt. Bertha withdrew her hand, lighted a cigarette, and looked at the clock on the wall.

"Almost twelve. They should be here any minute."

Half an hour later the door flung open, and the committee trooped in, Zellner fingering notes which he held out to Bram.

"All set. The United Workers walk out tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. Have it written up right away, and as soon as Cyril comes in, he'll run off the paper."

Bram wrote with pencil, standing up, and the girl set it in type. Comrade Max Wroblewski read the galley-proof. He walked over to a distant light, adjusted his glasses, and perused it over again, while the others stood about him respectfully, like men who felt that in the vicinity of that pure intelligence the last scrap of hallucination would be dispelled from their minds. For a long time the Pole studied the paper under the penthouse of his large, shapeless hat, which gave him a semblance of a mushroom. He had deduced a truth, weighed it in the scales of rigour, and was now applying to it the acid of his merciless logic.

Bertha was examining her fingers. She was as nervous as the rest. Bram looked at Comrade Max Wroblewski and tried to wrest from him the secret of his dominance. It was no use. The source of his power was obscure, as obscure as his past, which was subterranean and had to do with London cellars, con-

fiscated presses, and flights to elude the foes of idealism. The Pole tapped the paper with his glasses.

"A slight change is necessary, gentlemen. A slight change. Just say the vote was 'unanimous.' Our enemies must not think there was a lack of solidarity in tonight's deliberation."

The change was made. Cyril came down, spat on his hands, and began to work the press. Comrade Max Wroblewski raised a soft white palm in benediction and departed with the committee. The master took snuff and looked solemnly at the paper rushing through the machine and dropping into the basket, then roved back and forth with his hands clasped behind him, and elation gleaming through his spectacles; then he retired, followed by the girl and Cyril.

The night had hatched disquietude. The men in the shop looked odd that morning. They worked slowly, with disconnected movements, like puppets, with faces that seemed rounder because their eyes were open in suspense. Will had been taken from them. The spectacle of a thousand men working without initiative was as depressing as it was fantastic. Hands and bodies moved fitfully and then were recalled by the brain to the point of starting, with action uncompleted. Pulleys revolved jerkily, as if it were futile to revolve at all. At nine o'clock Council Banks, with his menacing Goth's beard jutting forward, moved up the aisle swiftly, and all eyes followed him. In his hand was a copy of the *Monthly Worker*. Behind him came

Porson and a group of emissaries from the main office. Banks directed some words at Zellner in an inaudible tone; the master lifted his file and turned to make a reply that was no louder, then resumed his work. Banks jerked up his head and strode out with his attendants, his teeth shining through his beard.

It seemed that he was hardly gone before the cloudiness of the sky drifted into the shop, and the gallery began to darken. The lights were actually diminishing. With a prolonged note the voice of the machines stopped suddenly. The pulleys ceased to revolve. Arms by the hundred thrust out to strike to dead centre the belt levers.

"Power's off," grunted a workman. "What's this mean?"

"It's not ten o'clock yet," complained another.

"Nine fifteen, but we can quit now and be damned. That's Bank's little hint."

"He's the cheese."

"It'll be a ragged march."

There was nothing the machine-workers could do but remove their overalls, stow their effects, and then sit on boxes with folded arms. The only sounds were the falsetto jeers of the apprentices, and the thunderous rasping of the devoted Boston at his vice. The cessation of noise was hypnotic. It paralysed thought, like a sudden loss of faith in what had seemed permanent. After an interval the bench workers began to ply hammer and chisel, and it was as the sound of

woodpeckers in a vast forest from which all life had fled at some ominous sign. Through the glass in the office partition Wragg and the clerks peered, jocular and knowing, like superior spectators at a marionette show.

Time dragged on to ten o'clock, and Zellner, after putting away his apron and tools, pulled on his coat and stepped into the aisle. He drew himself up, raised his arm, and threw it outward, with the gesture of a god urging mankind from darkness to light and a noble destiny. The men pushed out in solid blocks into the aisle, and the march was on. It wound down the stairs, joined the stream in the thoroughfare of the plant, and was augmented by the throngs gathered at the doors of the other shops. When the flood was abreast of them, other waiting masses merged into it. The flood was conscious of itself, egoistic, and if it had any regrets it was that it could not watch its own intimidating magnificence flow by. Every window in the façade of the main office bristled with heads. The clerks were thankful for a moment's diversion from the ledgers. On the steps were the corporation officials, chiefly in double-breasted blue serge suits and with sleeked hair and clipped whiskers. In the middle, ostentatious in his enjoyment of a cigar, stood Council Banks. The flood pushed through the gateway, and rigid as stumps in a river were the watchmen, who turned their ferret-eyes into the thou-

sands of faces, photographing in their memory notes in preparation for the day of reckoning.

The flood diminished at every cross-street. The sun had come out of the clouds, and the heat was full on the shoulders.

"Let's have a drink," said Trego. Bram and Haggertha followed him into the saloon on the canal bank.

"Well, the boys put up a pretty good front," he remarked, after beer had been placed before them at a table overlooking the water, which was here shaded by the bridge. They looked out at the patches of grass, the timber scows moving on the canal, and the dappled Percherons hauling them along the tow-path.

"What did you say we went out for?" asked Haggertha, wiping the foam from his moustache.

"General dissatisfaction. Everybody's sore. Fido, you wasn't born to turn plunger-rods all your life, like you were a slave. Did you see all those bosses in front of the office looking at us? There was some of them that never looked into a shop in all their lives. They didn't know there was any such thing." He looked about him. Every table was occupied. "All our shop is out," he said, "except Boston Lentz. We got him out of the coop, and he stays on—by way of thank-you."

"There was no harm in Boston. He don't ever say nothin' to nobody. There's nobody can fool with him. He'd give them a poke in the jaw first."

All the patrons were in exuberant spirits, and

spending money as if they had enough to drink on steadily for months. One tall person, however, drank not at all and moved dejectedly from one table to another as though in search of commiseration. He found none and came over to Trego. It was Johnny Bach of the valve-fitting gang, a tall and shambling man with a shop cap pulled over one eye, who spoke always in a whine. He held out to them a cabinet photograph that depicted himself seated with a dull and stout child on each knee, and a formidable wife behind him, with a hand resting firmly on his shoulder.

"What I want to know," he quavered, "is who's going to feed them? Somebody ought to take it up with the committee. Look at them little kids, Trego. And tell me how many kids you and Fritz Zellner has got."

Trego looked at the photograph, which was much worn, turned it over, then shook his head regretfully.

"You ought to have a new one took, Johnny. This has gone through four strikes. But I don't know. The girl's married, the boy's got a good job with Standard Oil, and what with you owning the shack Fido lives in and getting rent, you hadn't ought to go hungry."

Bach, aggrieved, moved elsewhere. Haggertha, with his mind on his beloved plunger-rods, stirred himself.

"What we goin' to do now?"

"Dig potatoes if they're ripe, or pick hops. How's that? What say we go up to Schoharie County and

pick hops to make good lager beer? Come along with us, Dartnell?"

Picking hops seemed a lowly occupation. Trades had a dignity about them, and able practitioners wore swallow-tail coats on Sunday, if they wanted to. Hop-pickers were tradeless, and that was all he knew about them, except for some witticisms on their morals in the fields, which had to do with vital statistics. "I'll come, Trego."

"Things are all messed up, and we had better get out of it. There's nothing we can do. If we cruised in the *Shop Boy*, some of those guards might take a pot-shot at us. They're just honing to get medals."

Haggertha, who had been demurring and talking about fish, reflected; then, since it appeared the guards would be really so touchy, decided to go with them. It took all afternoon to plan the expedition, and it was after six when Bram reached home. Some of the committee were there, looking over the papers and talking about the demonstration. Bertha, her work done for the time being, had gone out with Veronica, not to return until quite late. He had coffee and a pipe with Zellner and told him of his plans. The master approved. He was in expansive humour, foreseeing victory in the distance, and said that he had half a notion to go along and would if he were younger. Bram knew that he had not the slightest intention of going, for he loved a fight and was happy in the centre of his world.

In the print-shop Bram packed his things, put his papers in order, and occupied himself until very late. The door opened and Bertha appeared in her dressing-gown.

"If anything goes wrong, Bram, you come back at once," she said. She permitted him to kiss her. "Goodnight."

He was awakened before dawn by the rattling of pebbles on his window. He tumbled out, dressed, and joined the men outside. They were in clean overalls, with burlap knapsacks, and from Haggertha's a pair of fishing-rod tips rose above his head, like antennæ. They set out in the faint light for the hills to the north, walking all the way until noon, and after camping for luncheon on the bank of the canal, they were given a lift in a wagon which took them to the hop-fields at sundown.

A care-taker's wife conducted them to a bunk-house and sold them supplies enough for a week; and after cooking a supper in the kitchen that adjoined, they turned into their bunks early.

The morning gloomed with the menace of a storm. They dragged heavy ladders from one poled bush to another, picking at each station with the lack of thoroughness peculiar to beginners. Three or four times a bituminous cloud lowered and broke unexpectedly, and they cowered like toads under leaves until the sun smiled again. The ripe blossoms were on the top, and profitable harvest would not begin

before another week. Towards noon Haggertha uttered a loud cry of perplexity. In his absorption he had transcended the uppermost rung of his ladder. The two rushed up to stare in astonishment. For an agonizing moment the lathe-hand waved his arms in space, teetering like an inept gymnast in a balancing-act. Then he toppled head foremost to disaster and was enmeshed in rough foliage. He had to sit up for half an hour and smoke two pipes before he recovered his tranquillity.

"You were like one of them conjurers in vaudeville," Trego assured him.

"It's a trade, this hop-picking business. I wish I was in the shop or in my garden. If you fellows ever get back, I'll show you my garden. It's got Late Mammoth tomatoes in it."

When it drew on to dusk, they carried over to the care-taker's wife the booty of the day, in three bushel-baskets. She bickered querulously over the weight, allowed them an ounce or two as a reward for being mute, then gave them their earnings, a half-dollar and a dime. They walked up the road to a saloon at the railroad crossing and spent the wages on hard liquor, which they drank on the veranda thoughtfully.

"There's a fortune there, boys," said Trego. "A fortune. Acres of hops and nobody picking them but us. We'll go home in automobiles. Or ambulances. Heel-taps to Hat-peg!"

They sauntered back to the bunkhouse. Haggertha mixed dough in a saucepan and, searing some leathery and pallid disks on top of the stove, assured his companions they were griddle-cakes. The assurance made them not happy at all, but after a day of back-breaking work they were resigned to any fate. The coffee and the eggs were more encouraging. With hopes for the morrow, they curled up in their bunks.

The dew was still gemming the leaves when they commenced their morning's work. Instead of moving about they remained as long as they could at each pole and by ten o'clock had done not badly. Fortune was not now eluding them, nor the bright happiness that comes of light work in blossom-scented air. They even projected a stay of a month. Haggertha, waddling along with a laden basket against his knees, set it down hurriedly.

"They's somebody in our bunkhouse."

"We ought to go over," said Trego, watching the smoke rising from its chimney.

Four men were standing at the door as they approached. "Wearies," muttered Trego. The largest of them spoke, with his hands in his pockets. He was a lean, muscular fellow, dressed in faded blue clothes, with a grey shirt, a flat-topped hat, and razor-strop belt. The sun had tautened the skin over his cheek-bones and dulled the colour of his discerning eyes.

"Atlas strikers, aren't you?" he asked, chewing at a straw.

"We're from there, yes," Trego replied after some deliberation.

"I hope you'll win out. Yeh, win out." The words were drawled with indifference. "And you can get some more tea, ham stakes, and tinned salmon. How d'you like pickin' hops? It's a good job, but not so soft as workin' in parlour shops and pullin' down the pay cheque every week and goin' on strike once in a while to get some fresh air."

Trego caught something in those grey eyes that had escaped Bram.

"Well?" he said.

"Well," echoed the man with faint irony, easing a tight collar-band with a thick forefinger. He spat, then pointed into the field. "See them hops there? We've saved them a dozen times, I guess. We come around as regular as summer itself. We are season workers. Call us hoboes if you like. Maybe you'll feel better if you do, and we don't care. We pick apples in Maine, and peaches in Georgy, and tie wheat-sacks in Kansas. But we most partickerly like to pick —hops."

"We didn't know," said Haggertha after a pause, "that you was organized."

"The season organizes us. It's the same thing. We are here every summer—and there's about twenty more of us comin' up the road. Some of us would like shop jobs better. I'm not sayin' we wouldn't, even if we are Americans and not a lot of strikin' Polacks

that's rasin' hob all the time. We stick to our line, and we do like to pick these hops."

"This is a free country," said Haggertha. "America's a free country. And a man had ought to pick hops if that's what he likes doin'."

"Three men that's goin' a long ways in the sun," the man remarked sententiously, "can walk a little better after they have a drink."

All entered the bunkhouse and drank whisky out of a tin cup. To show the absence of hard feelings they shook hands all around. Another bottle was opened, and drunk with farewell toasts. There was no need for the Atlas men to pack up their belongings, for that had already been done for them in their absence. Their knapsacks were already piled up near the door. An aroma of meat and vegetables stewing in a pot on the stove permeated the bunkhouse. Haggertha sniffed at the wholesome fragrance, and his eyes fell upon the waving corn and melon-vines visible down a lane of hop-poles. The place had its charm, and the road would be hot that day.

"It's a comf'table place here," he mused. "Quiet, and plenty of nice shade."

The spokesman regarded him thoughtfully, then rubbed his chin stubble with a powerful, tanned fist.

"But I guess we'll be movin' along," said Haggertha, picking up his knapsack.

They departed, watched silently by the seasonal workers, and walked north. At the crossing Trego

paused, as if to pick up the links of a thought, then swore a little.

"Those wearies—they didn't want us around, I guess. When a lot of bums can put up a line like that, what can you say? Did you see the look that spieler gave our Fido here? He meant business. Well, fellows"—he rubbed his hands—"what we going to do now?"

"That's up to you, Trego," mumbled Haggertha, with his mouth closed on a clay pipe-stem. "You got us into the country. You helped vote us out of Shop Forty. Who's to water my Late Mammoth tomatoes? That's what I want to know."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WHEN they came to another railroad track, they tossed a coin and struck out for the west. If, instead of turning up heads, it had been tails, they would have elected for the west anyway, since nobody in the Atlas, once he had got out of it, ever went east, except to return to the Atlas. The west offered a solution for most problems, especially dissatisfaction and creditors. It was vaguely connotative of freedom, all parts of it except Idaho, where miners were frequently striking and always getting themselves shot.

The rails wound through agreeable country, along a stream, and for the greater part of the way they walked under trees that screened them from the sun's glare. The two elder mechanics did not care much for it. For two cents, so Bram inferred, they would have returned home. They could put up with the country as well as anybody else, if they had to; but they were simple men, conditioned in boyhood to uproar, machines, and oil-laden air, and this wandering far from their element filled them with disquietude. They talked of their apprentice days, and of bosses who had been severe to them, but to whom they were now grateful. They tried to surpass each other in

damning the Hat-peg. They compared Porson most unfavourably with other Hat-pegs.

Bram followed close behind, listening. They were the seniors of his world, and what they uttered was priceless to him. Their wisdom, which had been less acquired than forced upon them, took as much account of expediency as of principle.

"There was that fellow Rough-and-Ready Bill, that Hat-peg fired last summer. Remember him, Trego? He cut the wrong thread in a two-inch brass nut. He did the right thing—threw it out of the window. But the timekeeper saw him and squealed to Hat-peg. That was the end of Rough-and-Ready. After that, Hat-peg had the windows spiked down."

"Hat-peg has got things down to a fine point, Fido. The only thing a poor man with a family can do after he spoils something is to tie it on Hat-peg's neck and sink him into the water."

They cursed Hat-peg in a prayerful monotone, and that superinduced a nostalgia. Haggertha lamented that he had forgotten to engage somebody to water his tomatoes, and he discoursed on the perils of heat-cracks and the red spider. There would be nothing left of the garden by the time he got back. It was now after one, and they descended from the tracks to build a fire and cook a luncheon. A train thundered by, and a passenger, taking them to be lonely section-hands, hurled out of the window a bundle of news-

papers. Bram smoothed one out and read the headlines aloud.

"What's it say about the big strike?" asked Haggertha, who was cooking a sausage on a green stick. The item was elusive, but after a long search Bram found it.

" 'Claiming dissatisfaction with conditions,' " he read, " 'employees at the Atlas Ironworks here walked out yesterday morning. Reports of a general strike were denied by officials, who stated that merely a handful of foreign workmen were affected, and that their places were filled as soon as vacated.' "

"That's cheerful!"

Haggertha lowered the sausage and turned up eyes that welled in the acuteness of a sudden misery.

"Who they got at my lathe?" he asked. "I've had her fifteen years, and ground and fitted all her bearings myself. I only hope they'll put plenty of oil in her. Ever since a human gorilla that works nights broke her cross-feed gear, she's got to be nursed easy through a cutting-off job."

"You're safe," said Trego, pouring out coffee into mugs. "The paper says 'foreigners.' That means Polacks and Dutchmen, and you and I are not, nor is Dartnell here, and even if we was, instead of being Americans, they couldn't put in two thousand men on delicate jobs overnight."

Haggertha was not reassured. He had too much

faith in the printed word. He looked like a stray and disconsolate gnome as he squatted there by the fire, plucking at his hairy cheeks and recounting drearily the virtues of his lathe, as if it were a lost wife. He referred again to the tomatoes, which were probably done for by now. They resumed the journey. After another hour they came to an outfit-train locked on a spur track. It consisted of three box-cars, a caboose, and a mess-car.

"I don't know but we might get a berth of some sort here," said Trego. "That is, if we go after it."

He struck at the side of the caboose, and a lean Irishman who was writing at the open window put out his head.

"Any chance for jobs, chief?"

The chief turned away a face devoid of any gleam of hope and resumed his labours with the pen. "What can you do with a shovel?" he permitted himself to demur after some moments.

"We could manage to fry a piece of ham on it."

The chief put down his pen and spat out tobacco-juice approvingly.

"We just took on some section-hands in Atlas City, but we've got a long job here and I guess we can make use of a few good extras."

He emerged, beckoned to them to follow him, and near an intersection he unlocked a large tool-chest, from which he equipped them with a shovel, a pick, and a crow-bar apiece. With these on their shoulders

they marched after him down the track and beyond a curve, where a crew of men were engaged in relaying ballast, and there the Irishman released them after a curt nod from the boss. They began to ply their shovels like the rest, loosening the packed stone and raking over its surface. The stone was as heavy as broken iron. Every half-hour or so the rails had to be sprung over, a welcome break in the monotony. The boss gave a loud bark; all hands fixed crow-bar points under the metal, and at the next cry strained it forward in successive jerks.

An Italian with a sweeping moustache opened his mouth wide and seriously bellowed a song, harsh, but not unpleasing. He was a very large man, and his arms moved slowly; he rasped stones with a remorseless and effective stroke. He had been doing it for years. Bram, who was working at his side, restrained himself to the same tempo. The trouble was with his muscles, which rebelled against the unaccustomed tugs. Once he had to stop to bandage a sore wrist with a handkerchief. Trego mumbled profanely, and Haggertha toiled away in a dream, for his mind was in the shop and with his lathe. Their shirts were dripping, and the prickly heat took them under the arms. Two more Italians joined in the song and bleated tunefully the cadence:

Ti daro l'an—nel—lo
Del mio primo a—amor.

The boss lighted a pipe and with his hands behind him sauntered about leisurely, taking in with a contented eye the pretty grouping of the trees, the background of steel-blue sky, and the cane-brakes below, through which the water swirled and prattled. It sounded like the clinking of ice in a mixed drink. The drinking-water was warmish and brought around at very long intervals by a decrepit old man who hobbled along on a crutch. The landscape was harmonious, and so were its human ingredients, all except the shopmen. In the stretches between concerted action with the crow-bars the boss frequently sat on a rail and looked down into the stream.

"I seen a mush-rat down in them reeds, fellows," he said aloud. "I wish I could catch me a mush-rat. But they are shifty animals."

Haggertha turned, leaning on his shovel. "I'll catch you a mush-rat. When the sun goes down."

The boss made no response and stared below contemplatively. He was a stout and arrogant man, who held no converse with his inferiors. He was of the same bulk and age as the first Italian and moved with equal conservation of energy. Bram wondered why, all things being allowed for, he should have advanced in the world while the other remained wedded to the shovel. Certainly he had no more brains. It took as much intelligence to sing as to bark simple orders which everybody obeyed at the cost of losing his job and walking back for miles. The boss was an object-

lesson in inertia, and he probably knew that inertia was a good thing to keep, for it contributed to ease of mind and reflection. Perhaps he was more of a dreamer than the Italian, and the glowing zeal in his dreams, his creative attitude, had propelled him towards his desire—a boss's job. And he didn't let his dreams interfere with going after what he wanted.

"There he goes again," said the boss to himself, half rising to watch a musk-rat.

The sun wheeled behind a mountain crowned with light, and a cooling wind flowed down the track. The boss tugged at a hair-chain and pulled out a silver watch, an inch and a half thick.

"Knock off, fellows."

He spoke it as if it were a reluctant admission, and the crew heard it as if it were a shout. They pressed forward with their tools. The boss lowered his head at them questioningly.

"Who's the guy," he began, speaking with cynical emphasis, "who's the guy around here that said he could catch live mush-rats?"

Haggertha was discreet, but hopeful. "I said that. If there's any down in that crick, I can catch them."

He descended into the ravine, while the others squatted on the bank to watch him and make humorous comments. No movement was discernible among the reeds, but the lathe-hand, versed in the arcana of animate nature, listened, peering about and prodding the mud with his stick. Then he emerged to remove

his shoes and stockings and roll up his trousers above the knees. He whittled a pair of cane stems, looped them with string, and crawled out of sight. Ten minutes went by. There was a splash, followed by a loud squeaking, and Haggertha climbed up with a furry animal in his hands.

The boss received it with a grunt of satisfaction. "Never saw that done before. Wouldn't of believed it if I hadn't saw it done. A fellow that can catch a mush-rat is a wiz." He stroked its head. "If he can do it without killing them. Poor damned little things, they got to live."

All marched back to the camp, Haggertha walking by the side of the gratified boss. They scrubbed themselves at pails on the car steps, and the cook smote a dish-pan to announce that supper was ready. They dined at tables set under trees that had gone feathery in the dusk, and they were waited upon by the limping old man and the cook's helper. It was a protracted meal, and quiet, except for the loud complaint of the cook when the Italian ensured himself his share of the dessert by pouring some of the tinned peaches over the boiled meat and potatoes. The meal was not over before the frogs began their concert. The green deepened in the evening light and in ineffable peace, and, smoking their pipes, the men moved slowly, like figures on a stage, or stood apart to look on, as if enchanted by the beauty of the changed scene. The boss

and Haggertha, after they had made a hutch for the musk-rat, had gone down into the ravine to fish.

The cook loudly commented on the folly of anybody's trying to catch fish in that water. "There's nobody ever caught a fish in that crick," he affirmed. He was a bronzed man, who smoked a cigar and was authoritative in a golfing-cap and apron of flour-sacks. "I ought to know if anybody does. I've been working on this line for twenty-five years and cooked on the private car of old Tom Platt."

The cook ranked with the boss; he was more dignified, and it was believed that he made three times as much money, for it was he who sold all the tobacco, matches, and soap used in the outfit-train. He did not unbend when he began an anecdote to reveal his intimacy with Tom Platt, though he did stop short when the boss and Haggertha reappeared, carrying five or six large mud-fish thrust through the gills on a reed they carried between them.

It was already dark, and most of the crew had turned in early. The air in the bunk-car was thick with tobacco fumes, and Trego, who feared asphyxiation, slid the door half open. Objection to the night air was expressed violently and in two languages. The three shopmen turned the lamp low and began to play cards. It was a poor game, and Haggertha flung down his hand.

"I was thinking of Coughlan, Trego."

"Leave the balloon alone. Things are bad enough. What did he do?"

"Well, he stayed in after the march. Then he went up to Hat-peg and said he'd run Jeens's machine, and would it be all right with Hat-peg? Hat said it was all right, and Coughlan went over to the job. Th' old junk-heap was just gettin' warm when Council came along. Wragg said the old man pulled up like a balky mule. 'The machinists,' he hollers at Coughlan, 'is all out in this shop!' Then he hollers again, as if he was goin' to snap his head off: 'The machinists is all out.' "

"Then what happened?"

"Coughlan tumbled to himself and went right out. He figured that Banks was sore at him."

"Hat-peg is a mean one."

"No man could sink any lower."

The head track-walker sat up frowsily in his bunk. "Lay off that talking, will you? Can't a fellow get any sleep in this spit-box without a pair of wobblies talking through their hats at him?"

That roused another sleeper, and the two argued feelingly until the Italian thumped the floor in warning with a heavy boot.

Fast also was broken outdoors. The cook's flunkeys carried out coffee by the pail, and pans of griddle-cakes, fried pork, and eggs. The boss, scrubbed pink and with his grey hair roached like a cockatoo's crest,

sat genially at the head of the table. He had an ornate coffee-cup, with "Present from Atlas City" on it.

"Well, boys," he announced, "the little old mush-rat slept pretty good last night. He slept in his hutch under my bunk. I tell you what, a fellow that can catch a mush-rat is a wiz."

He was the first to leave, the others straggling some twenty yards after him. The march reminded Bram of the thousand times he had passed in and out of the gates of the Atlas. He had a twinge of homesickness and a sense of losing priceless time. He thought of Bertha and her serene cleverness. There would be nobody now between her and the master. It would not surprise him in the least to hear that she had suddenly taken it into her head to marry him. Zellner had got somewhere and was definitely a cut above the ordinary mechanic. One couldn't expect a girl of that sort to tie up with anyone as subservient to petty bosses as himself, doomed to leap for ever at the command of the Hat-peg and to escape only to tramp with pick, shovel, and crow-bar on his shoulder after a track boss with an absurd roach like a cockatoo's.

"How do you like it, Haggertha?" he asked, to free himself from the thoughts that were constricting him. "No plunger-rods to worry about, and two dollars a day and your keep."

"I was thinking about the lathe last night. I only hopes those foreigners don't forget to tighten up the

shims in the cross-feed carriage, and give the gear-box shaft a squirt of oil regular."

"You had better be thinking of liniment for yourself instead."

A freight train came along and rattled by, to wind up with a dozen flat-cars loaded down with tarpaulined bulks that resembled elephants. It was a load of machinery. On the black tarpaulins was stenciled in big white letters: "ATLAS ENGINES." They went past with a hollow roar. Bram turned to watch them disappear through the cut and became aware that two other men had paused also to gaze lingeringly after them. He said nothing, nor did Haggertha and Trego.

The shovels began to clink on the iron-stone. The boss moved up and down to incite them with a cracking of fingers to steadier effort before the sun rose too high. It was still hard work for the shopmen. An engine backed a string of gondolas on to the spur track and the brakemen pulled levers and unloaded a stupendous quantity of fresh ballast. The work was getting harder, and the only respite was when the trains came through. They drew back at the first intimation of approach, leaned on their shovels, and breathed freely, then took their time over moving forward again. The boss watched the trains intently for a message. One came at the end of a quarter of a mile of box-cars. A brakeman on top waved his arm,

and released a folded paper, which fluttered like a lame bird.

"Mr. Haggertha," the boss called out, "will you please pick up that butterfly?"

The lathe-hand gazed searchingly into the air, but could perceive no such interesting insect.

"Meaning some kicked-off official paper, in railroad talk, Mr. Haggertha," the boss explained.

After it was brought to him, he gave Haggertha a red flag.

"You just lay by over to that curve there, and when a train comes, give us a wigwag. And if there's any more butterflies, pick them up."

The crew began to load the ballast on hand-cars and scatter it over a mile of track. Bram and Trego had one of these small cars to themselves. The heat reverberated by the freshly broken rock was intense, and their feet were blistered. They prayed for more trains to come, even though that meant lifting the small car from the tracks and replacing it once more. They moved continually in the glare of the sun, and the sole shade was at the curve, where scrub beeches grew down from the cut. This was Haggertha's post. He reclined there in a small hollow, and when a distant whistle sounded, he rose and waved his flag with no more than the required energy, and after the necessity was over, he relapsed into his hollow. As if to testify to his complacence and physical well-being, a thread of smoke rose continually from his pipe.

"That," said Trego, "is what you get for being a wiz. I don't see much equality around here. Dartnell, you never had much luck with the bosses inside the Atlas, and that's why you don't find any outside."

They stepped aside and watched a passenger train pass by. They beheld through the flashing row of windows a vision of upholstered chairs with superior beings lolling in them. A stout man on the observation platform waved at the flagman, then threw towards him a newly-lit cigar. Haggertha captured the gift and stowed it in his hat against the halcyon time of dusk, when a cigar is at its best.

"Division boss," grunted the Italian, after the train had clanked out of sight beyond the curve. "That's no nickel cigar."

The boss sent a bestial cry at them, and they once more bowed their spines over the iron-stone. The incident of the cigar disturbed Trego's mind for several days. It gave him something to brood over and occupy him. That was just as well. The days and nights were monotonous enough. It was three weeks before the ballasting on that section was done; then a large engine appeared, nosed about on the spur track, then trundled the outfit-train without further ado to Rochester, or within a mile of it. The job now was to assist in building a new culvert. The crew hauled material in wheelbarrows, mixed concrete, and poured it into a mould and tamped it with heavy blocks at the end of poles. It rained copiously, and nobody

liked to work. The boss clumped continually in the muck and bawled in raucous dispraise of their morals and sinews.

Haggertha was elevated to the dignified post of lamp-tender. His duties consisted in polishing a dozen lanterns, setting them out at sundown, and bringing them in after breakfast, and writing in a book the amount of oil withdrawn from the barrel. He had a few other chores to do, but they were negligible. The rest of the time he accompanied the boss on business trips, chiefly at the near-by saloons, dozed in the lamp-shed, which he referred to as his "office," or sat in a chair placed outside, when the rain let up, so that he could enjoy a pipe in comfort and watch how the work was progressing. Newcomers confused him with the boss and treated him with respect. The others discussed his faults and cast reflections on the legitimacy of his birth. Haggertha troubled himself about none of them. Something hardly definable had made a change in him. Perhaps it was good fortune. He was satisfied with himself and probably regarded plunger-rods as part of a past that was already forgotten or triumphed over.

Early one morning Bram awoke to hear him in altercation with the boss.

"Well, why didn't you look at him once in a while?"

"You made that hutch for him, out of wood. Didn't you know that mush-rats eat wood?"

"You should have watched him more careful."

"He's gone now. Ate his way clean through, as if the hutch was made of paper."

Already the news was being discussed with animation by the crew. It appeared that the musk-rat had disappeared during the night, and that the boss had taken the loss to heart. Fallen from grace, Haggertha was put back on hard labour and given a wheelbarrow and tamping-bar like the others. Bram relished the catastrophe. Haggertha had basked on the fringes of Hat-peggism long enough, and it had got on the nerves of his two mates. Concerned only with his grievance, and harking back to his lathe and the plunger-rods once more, Haggertha sulked of evenings and sat on his bunk morosely, looking more than ever like an unkempt and disconsolate Skye terrier.

The Irish clerk, who led a secluded existence in the caboose, came over to Bram with a newspaper. It was a day old.

"That interest you?" he asked, shifting his toothpick. He pointed to an item. It went:

> Conditions at the Atlas Ironworks are improving, it was learned here yesterday in a dispatch received from Atlas City. Only a few dissatisfied workmen remain idle, officials stated, and these will probably return following a meeting to be held tonight.

"It turned out to be a bum parade, I guess. Say,

is anybody ever satisfied? You and your side-pullers going back? I'll fix up your time."

Bram's companions, when apprised, showed no surprise at all. The matter of pay was arranged with the boss, who betrayed most profanely his naïve delight at getting rid of them. The three boarded a train at the station and settled themselves in the smoker, with their feet on the cushions. Trego, examining his battered hands, gathered his thoughts.

"Well, we quit one Hat-peg to go back to another one," he muttered. And when they were abreast of the culvert, he threw up the window and leaned half out in the drizzle. He discharged a farewell speech at the section boss, on whose face could be discerned stupor and a mounting but impotent wrath.

"Mush-rat lover," "Mush-rat face" were some of the words Bram managed to hear. The other terms were less affectionate, as was to be expected from a man who had been rehearsing them for a month.

It was evening when they reached Atlas City. Bram went home at once. He stood for several minutes with his hand on the knob of the living-room door before he opened it. She was in a chair with a book on her lap. It was as if she had been awaiting him.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

TEN o'clock, eleven. Their voices murmured on of things of import, of no import at all. How could he tell what mattered? He sat curled up in the deep chair, with his head on his arm, fatigued in a little world that had long ago succumbed to weariness. It had gripped with the Atlas and had been impersonally hurled back at the first contact. It had thought to rend an abstraction and had received palpable wounds. The room was full of stuporous breathing. Behind the locked door Zellner had been sleeping heavily since early morning.

To Bram the chief thing was that Bertha was there before him, still serene and clever and faintly smiling, though she, too, looked weary. And the next thing was that the fight had been lost. It had ended with lamentable suddenness, without glory or heroics. He gathered, indeed, that it had fizzled out ignominiously. Zellner had remained staunch to the end and at the last meeting had raised his voice in protest. He was a strong man. Comrade Max Wroblewski was as strong, but more artful. The time was not yet ripe, he said, and there were other factors. And he told them to go back. The meeting broke up with ludicrous squabbles on the platform, and Ber-

tha had led the master home at once. He stumbled over the place like a blind person and toppled across the bed like one quite drunk.

"Why," asked Bram, "why didn't they take all these things into account? The Socialists repudiated the United Workers. They scored direct action. Very well, but why—?"

Bertha, biting at a finger-nail and looking at him, nodded with an eyebrow raised in sympathy with his puzzlement. "Yes, why? Why to many other things?"

"I suppose the men were much cut up over it?"

"No, I couldn't say they were. It didn't mean much to them in the end. But that doesn't affect the principle any. Fritz has got it still. He knows one can't have everything, and he will hang on to that."

After that they said good-night and retired. There was no use thinking any more about it. He was rather surprised how calmly he was going to sleep after such a catastrophe.

Loud in the morning blew the siren at the Atlas. The house received it full on the breeze through the open windows; throaty, sonorous, and complacent. Cyril had made the coffee. Zellner came in to partake of it when Bram entered the living-room. The master, with his head thrown back, was buttoning the collar of his blue shirt and looked brisk and normal, but his eyes were muddy and still dazed.

"Good-morning, Dartnell," he said, looking fixedly at the coffee-pot. Then he slapped his hands together

as if to start a spark going within himself. Then, since his hands shook so, Cyril filled the cup for him.

The master said not a word all the way down to the shop and responded to no salutation or nod. Dust was thick on the machines, they perceived when they entered. The bench workers stood at their vices and put on their aprons and moved their arms as if they were emerging from a catalepsy. Men stared at their dust-covered work as if little hopeful of finishing what they had started to do a month before, and some of them as if they had forgotten what it was all about. The machines began first, and in less than half an hour the belts were clattering like heavy rain after a drought. Boston Lentz, the sole worker that had remained during the strike, was rasping away like an automaton, but with a stroke improved by practice. Council Banks, with beard thrust out, dashed through the gallery and out again. The white shirt-sleeves of the efficient Porson flashed among the piles of castings like a will-o'-the-wisp. On a box before his machine sat the beatified Haggertha, calipers in hand, watching the long chips evolve in steam beneath the trickle of ammonia water, then clatter, parade, and break off on the floor.

Jeens, with arms folded, and in a black gown like a monk, stood at his great lathe, with eyes fixed on a minute tool that was taking off a curl no thicker than cigarette-paper from the periphery of an immense wheel, and with his brain speculating in a congenial

milieu vibrant with the *profondo* humming of a myriad gears. Far down the line, the massive Coughlan, leaning on his stick, appeared to be holding a reception. He was shaking hands with Wragg, the sporting gentry of the shop, and other admirers. They rejoiced again to see his comforting bulk, wink, and confidential smile, and they listened, flattered, to his newest jokes, which they would hasten to repeat in distant portions of the shop before anybody else got hold of them. The man was beyond good and evil. The story of his treachery at the beginning of the strike was known to everyone. It lowered him not a jot in the esteem of anyone except two or three men like Zellner. It was regarded as a rich story, an anecdote illustrative of a deep, whimsical, and distinguished nature. He was unmoral and acted from his instincts, and therefore he was understood and forgiven. Jeens, for one, would keep on buying hand-soap from him.

Zellner, with a magnifying-glass screwed into his eye, was chipping at his cannon-ball vice as if he had not stirred from it in a month. His face was pouchy, and his hand was less firm. He sat immovable, with the broad of his back turned towards the others in the enclosure, like a blank wall behind which he sat sombre and impassive. A flood of jubilant light streamed upon him through the window and glistened on the "efficiency scales" near his tool-box, reflecting on the polish of the nickled scoop.

"Get back there!"

Bram turned and thrust out his arms to catch the figure reeling towards him. It was the Italian sweeper boss, who recovered himself, then backed out, grinning sheepishly at Boston, who had struck him a blow.

"That's enough!" "Lay off of that!" "No rough stuff here!" The mechanics rapped their vices and chorused chidingly.

It was Boston in another of his tantrums. He had an insane way of striking out with his elbow whenever a man came or passed unexpectedly behind him. And when it was all over, he was himself again, meek and contrite. At first the men had resented this bitterly and had often been on the point of reporting it to Council Banks, but after Bram's dissuasions and Haggertha's pleadings they put up with it and now took it as a matter of course. They became aware of the secret terror that stood ever behind him, ready to clap him on the shoulder and march him back to prison. Zellner did not even turn around at the incident just now. But he suddenly clapped both his hands on the bench, half raised himself, then, taking his hat and coat, hurried away. All eyes watched him as he moved with a heavy impetus down the gallery and out of sight.

"Guess the old man wants a drink," remarked Schlemmer. "The first day is always tough."

It came to a close normally, for all that, though Zellner did not return. "Old man's hoisting 'em up,"

"Fritz is bending the merry elbow over to the Dutchman's," said the men. But they had not seen the manner in which he left.

Bertha was surprised to see Bram come in alone. She questioned him. And it was his turn to be surprised.

"I thought he had gone home to turn in again for another sleep. He bolted out as if he were in a great hurry."

They waited until nine o'clock, but he did not return. Perhaps he had gone up to the book-shop. It was absurd to think that he had gone up there to play chess. That idea had also come to Bertha, and she made a comment aloud. She shrugged, then looked inquiringly at Bram.

"Put on your things, and we'll go up," he said.

He had spoken in the tone of a suggestion, but she had obeyed at once, and they set out, she walking by his side in confidence. They were at the shop in ten minutes. They opened the door, the bell pinging as usual, and entered the large room. On the middle table was a small, flat trunk half packed, or unpacked. Some of the books had been piled up and roped. Bram had often wondered what hope the Utopian Pole could have had of selling the dreary and sterile junk with which he had loaded his shelves. There were books on phrenology, astrology, domestic medicine, anti-Biblical exegesis; Hebrew encyclopædias, apocrypha on the Maccabees, dusty bundles of the *Truth-*

seeker and the *Light*, the works of E. P. Roe, and sweepings from lumber-rooms filled in the decade when cloak-and-sword romances had been in vogue.

The curtain at the back parted, and Veronica was looking at them.

"Is he there?" Bertha asked.

She nodded, and they pushed through. The master was slumped in a chair at the head of the table, with his fingers spread out on the oilcloth. His face had gone slack, and when he saw them, he laughed aloud, but in an embarrassed way and as if to himself over a mysterious joke. Seeing that they were incredulous, he threw back his head, gave a mirthless roar, then turned aside to slap his knees and nod convulsively. Veronica, fingering her brooch nervously, peered at them.

"Where's Comrade Max?" asked Bertha.

Zellner turned heavily and attempted to balance a tea-spoon. "Yes, where is he? Gone west. Nobody knows where. Even Veronica doesn't know. He was a foxy one, all right. Comrade Max Wroblewski!" He bellowed. "Comrade!"

"I knew nothing about it until this morning," said Veronica. "Then his letter came from Chicago. I burned it."

"A sell-out?" Bertha ventured.

"Too bad we'll have to keep it secret. And such a good joke it is, too!" He tittered and rubbed his nose. "It wasn't the damned orthodox Socialists that spiked

us after all. It was the old reliable doctor Max. He's gone west with the grip."

"Who else knows?" Bram asked.

"The Hat-peg, of course. It was he that passed him the roll. What I want to know is why Max didn't take the old print-press along with him, Zellner added in irritation. "There's five dollars' worth of old iron in it. Well, well—yes. Keep it a secret. Nobody knows it but us and Hat-peg and Rags. If anybody had dreamed that, I'd have told him not to be such a damned fool."

He got up, laughed rudely, and wiped his bare scalp with a bandanna.

"Come along, Dartnell. Let's get out of here. Bertha, you stay with Veronica awhile."

They went out. At the end of the block Zellner leaned against a post, pressed the handkerchief to his mouth, and looked up at the stars. He rehearsed, with all the oaths in the four languages of which he was master, the particulars of that blemish on mankind that was Max Wroblewski. Then he coughed himself into a spasm and, recovering, began again. Some pedestrians were coming up the street, and Bram took him by the arm. He suffered himself to be led home, and he rocked in his chair before the bare fireplace.

"Dartnell, I've had thirty years of this. Listen to me. You've got to watch them close, those hellions. They'll do you every time. I mean Hat-peg and that stripe. Dartnell"—he turned a ghastly smile upon

him, like a dying man full of a revelation—"it's the lackeys you've got to watch out for. Don't ever let them get the knife into you. Strike first! You're a fool if you don't. That way you get at the System. What would it be if it wasn't for those footpads and pig-stickers. They've made the Atlas a mortuary. Banks is no better. He's an old slyboots. Look at the grin behind his whiskers!"

He got up, lumbered into his room, and hurled himself upon the bed, with a tumult of the springs.

Bertha entered towards three. "It was a bad night, I'll say," she remarked, throwing her hat upon the table.

That bad night threw a shadow over all the spirits in the house for weeks afterwards. There were no more open evenings. They humoured the master to that extent. He would admit nobody from the outside, except Wilhelm Voight. He gave up books and would either rock vacantly before the empty fireplace or sit with a small vice clamped to the chair-arm and immerse himself in a bit of engraving. It was an old seal-ring which he had made blank, to carve again with a macabre design of a skull, thorns, and an eye. It soothed him to work on it, and he toiled over the piece for hours at a time with loving intensiveness.

The *Monthly Worker* appeared that month. There was no reason why the process of attrition should let up. Bram wrote much of it, the girl wrote three columns, and the rest they filled up from the books.

Bram took a pride in it. There was still prospect of salvage from the wreck. The press was appreciably far from being a pile of junk, and if subscriptions should come in, so much the better for the locker, if the society should start up again. It wasn't exactly dead. At least a hundred members had survived the debacle. Wilhelm Voight, the secretary, kept the roster of them.

Zellner took an interest in that issue. He brightened on rereading it. It was surprising what it did for him, or so Bram imagined. His moroseness lessened, though in the shop he led a detached and belligerent life, yearning, with a sparkle in his eyes, for a row with Porson whenever he came stamping up to inquire about some job or other. And instead of keeping close to the fireplace he went out more, and often Bram heard him come in at two or three in the morning. He concerned himself with these tramps not at all, nor even wondered where Zellner could go. It was just a vagary. The household was full of vagaries.

It was a morning in mid-August when Haggertha came into the enclosure at the first blast of the noon whistle and hurried Boston out with him, carrying along a fish-net that he had stored in his locker against an emergency. It was a bright day, and Bram strolled out with the intention of watching them. A throng of workmen were standing on the bank, peering into the channel. Others came on the run from various

shops. Was Haggertha having extraordinary luck in snaring eels?

He peered over. The channel had gone dry. What a phenomenon! Though all the water had seeped out during the night and the morning, the bed was full of treasures. It was like an underwater garden, a wilderness of rusted and craggy metallic foliage. Elsewhere the muddy bottom was visible, but along Shop Forty the crater was luxuriant. Steel shafts bristled like guns in an abandoned redoubt. Fifteen-foot steel disks, corroded and dripping, leaned against them. There were immense castings, wheels, pulleys, steam-pipes, and tubes. A huge engine-frame, half sunk into the mud, might have been jettisoned by Titans. For diversity there were ruined motors, heaps of copper and brass that had been spoiled in machining, snarled lengths of wire, decayed barrels oozing small parts, and a sowing of broken tools.

Some of the workmen started, then withdrew stiffly like actors in an amateur tableau on the entrance of a ghost. The apparition formed into the very concrete Council Banks, who stood, rapping his stick, on the parapet. He descended leisurely and looked up at the Andes of rust and metal. He prodded with his cane. He reflected. He displayed the keen and sniffing interest of a scientific man who had come across a bone discovery likely to be of the first importance.

The window of the mezzanine stockroom shot up.

Bram turned his head to perceive Porson looking out. From below, the old Goth directed at him a corrosive stare and a grin like a death's-head.

"Mr. Porson," he said, tapping the engine-frame with the stick, "please to come down at once and bring Coughlan with you. He might be able to explain something."

The influence of the accusing eyes was like a fascination on Porson; he stirred with difficulty, then disappeared. In two minutes he appeared on the bank.

"You've been damned careless," said Banks. "Where's Coughlan? I'd like to see him. Didn't you hear me tell you to bring him here? I'd like to hear a good story, just now. There's plenty of good stories here, going back ten years and more."

Porson opened his mouth, standing with rigid clumsiness like a soldier who had suddenly to confront a court martial.

"Coughlan's already gone, Mr. Banks. So have a dozen others."

"Very well, call Wragg and the clerks and make an inventory of all you see here. Do the proper sacking. Then I'll have the water run into this ditch, somehow or other. The look of it, Mr. Porson, is enough to make a man sick. Don't you agree with me, Mr. Porson?"

The whistle rose throatily. But most of the men were already in. It was just as well to be out of the

way. The fat and jovial watchman, talking to a crane operator, was just ahead of Bram. He gave perturbed waves of his plump hands.

"No, no," he was saying. "There was no harm done —except a lot of nuisance. It was some fishermen, I tell you. They put down three or four sticks of dynamite to get a mess of fish, and that loosened the earth on the dam. Water seeped out slowly. The maintenance boss will be cussing his head off because his gang will have to shovel back that muck."

Bram entered as uncomfortable as the rest, for the sense of dismay was all-pervading. As he neared the enclosure, Zellner was scrutinizing him through his spectacles. The gleam in his eye was one of subdued triumph. Well, why shouldn't it be? It had been a good day for him. The devil now was what to say to Zellner. The abyss had betrayed its secret. That was the terrific fact, the one thing of the year that nobody could help talking about. Perhaps the less he said, the better. Zellner must have been aware that his manifestations of interest in the dam during the cruises of the *Shop Boy* could not have been forgotten. And those night disappearances, again.

Bram was relieved when Boston came in with a burlap bag squirming with eels and catfish. The gang peeped into it enviously. Then Schlemmer, pushing a wad of tobacco into his mouth, sprawled over Zellner's bench.

"Well, Fritz, how'd you like to be in Hat-peg's

shoes right now? Tough, huh? He's on the carpet in the main office, and there'll be hell a-poppin', Wragg says. He says he don't know what'll be the end. Coughlan got sick. Took him right in the stummick, it did. Well, there's a million dollars' worth of stuff in the creek, and there's been good men kicked out for spoilin' a hunk of iron that wasn't worth a dime. Fritz, that's what they call efficiency."

It was a perturbed world, nevertheless, rife with ghosts that had stalked back from the abyss of oblivion. Alone in the gallery the master set the workers an example of composure. Once, later in the afternoon, Bram heard him twitter like a thrush as he bent over his cannon-ball vice.

"You have heard the news. What would old Carlyle think of it?"

File in hand, the master turned to confront Jeens, then gazed at him thoughtfully. He appeared to be comparing his shirt with Jeens's black gown, both incredibly soiled, and wondering which was the dirtier. Jeens was looking at him with concern and inquiry. Zellner frowned.

"Think of what?"

"The war that has just been declared."

Zellner rapped his vice with testiness. "Who cares what the old bagpipe would think? War! Jeens, have we had anything else here except war? Answer me that. Why should you bother your head with a bowl

of porridge or declarations when all the fighting you want is going on under your nose?"

Jeens meditated. Then he turned and with conscious rectitude, serenity, and flouncing of his skirts marched back to his alcove and his meditations at the great lathe.

August the 14th. It was a memorable day. Coughlan, the massive and infallible, got bounced. Wragg brought the news over to Bram, but the larger part of the world of the Atlas was already aware and was aghast at the downfall. There were other casualties; five foremen out, and twelve of the workers, including Cullen, the crane boss.

"I tell you, I don't know what will come of it all," said Wragg.

Porson, distraught and greyer, returned to his desk from the Star-chamber in the main office and all day kept close to the comforting shadow of the hat-peg. Three nights later the water flowed back into the channel.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"THE men say that whenever you are prepared, the meetings will be held again," said Foster Sweeney.

"One hundred members are ready to give you support," said Wilhelm Voight, whose care it had been to keep intact the nucleus of the faithful. "*Ein hundert, mein lieber Fritz,*" he repeated with gruff affection.

Now that the winter evenings had set in, Voight had been coming up frequently, and his accustomed seat was a chair in a dark corner, from which he could fix his monocle on the superb, conical head of the master, which gleamed in flat planes under the light over the fireplace. Tonight he had brought up with him the sombre and influential moulder in the black shirt, whom Zellner esteemed because of his reputed knowledge of Irish history.

After these remarks they puffed larger clouds from their pipes and listened for his comment. Bertha, writing at the table, put down her pen to watch him.

"It is absurd for you to think you have lost any of your personal following," she asserted.

Bram, with a drawing-pen in his hand, raised his head and nodded at her approvingly. She was all

common sense. She knew also that by touching the spring of egoism persistently enough the driving force might start again. There was expectancy in her eyes, and yet a shade of regret. Bram had seen it more than once since his return. In Zellner, the snuff-stained and gross behemoth in red socks and a dirty polka-dot shirt, who rocked and grunted in his big chair, she had discerned a glow and had so adored it that she had been willing to change the pattern of her life to be near its warmth. She must even have deeply loved the being that was its vessel.

She also had spoken the truth. There was another strange thing he had learned in the almost complete world of the Atlas. Zellner, in spite of the debacle of the United Workers, was still the respected and revered master, still the unchallenged protagonist of discontent and revolt. Porson, in spite of his double humiliation when he offered himself as a candidate for sheriff, and the catastrophe of the ditch, was still the Hat-peg. Neither had lost prestige. Both were still the complete symbols of what they represented. It was easier for the men to accept them as unchanged symbols than to ponder on whether their values had changed in any degree. And so they were as they were before, outwardly. What tribulation had done to the insides of them, Bram did not know. Nobody in the Atlas cared. In fact, it made surprisingly little difference to anyone what anybody else did. A day or so of gossip, and the thing was forgotten.

"Very well. Tell them we'll reorganize and get together again," said Zellner.

He had come back. His voice filled the room with the rough and virile splendour in which he had spoken in other days, and, rocking in his chair, he nodded at them with assurance. Bertha turned her head at once, put a handkerchief to her eyes, then beamed at him with pride.

"Nothing remains now but to find suitable quarters. That, I trust, will be a simple matter."

He spoke with such finality that the two visitors got up at once and, after shaking hands with him, departed.

"That Foster Sweeney," mused Zellner, stirring himself to tap snuff into his nostrils, "is a very intelligent man. Voight was saying it was worth money to hear Sweeney recite dates and all the names of the kings of Ireland."

He rocked in silence for several minutes, then chuckled to himself.

"It ought to be pretty good to hear all that. But I never heard him say anything. He's no windbag like Jeens. Maybe he never loosens up until he has had a little liquor under his belt."

He dragged up a foot, placed it on his knee, and, after peeling off the sock, regretfully examined his great toe.

"Thought I had broken it this morning when that Pestov knocked that gear blank off my bench. That

fool is getting worse and worse. Ruined a job on me yesterday. By the way, Dartnell, finished that drawing yet? That milling cutter for those manganese bushings?"

"I've just finished it."

"What steel did you specify?"

"The usual tool-steel that comes in stock bars. Ten pounds of it."

The master shook his head. "No, get some of that high-speed molybdenum stuff. If Voight hasn't got any, then you prowl over in that tool-crib in Shop Twenty and see if you can't hook a nice piece of it. We'll show Hat-peg we've got mechanics who can make cutters that will eat up manganese bushings as if they were butter-rolls. You make it yourself. I'll put Pestov on something else. Give it plenty of lip and rake. Molybdenum will stand for it pretty."

He had made similar tools before, for the master gave him most of the best jobs, and on occasion both Porson and Banks had come into the enclosure to receive a cutter from his hands, as if it were a matter of course. Pestov had sulked for a week after. Bram had pored oved Rose's *Machine-Shop Practice*, a heavy book loaded with diagrams and pictures of these tools, and had copied most of them into a dozen note-books, which he kept hidden from the master's sight. The ascent to virtuosity of his protégé he attributed, with inward pride, to his own guidance, and to a certain degree he was justified.

For a month of nights and Sundays he had tramped through the snow with Bertha, hunting for a rendezvous for the faithful. Luck tapped them on the shoulder before a place on a side street ten blocks away. It was a church, an abandoned church, squeezed in between a saloon and a German grocery. It had a spire and a stained glass window boarded with mossy planks. The rent, so he learned from the saloonkeeper, a trade acquaintance of Madgett, would be ten dollars a month.

With Voight and Foster Sweeney they brought the master up to see it. He sat in the front pew and looked dazedly at the pulpit and the window embellished with doves, trumpets, and an archangel. It might have been the incongruity arising from the contrast between the temple and himself, or it might have been the proximity of the beer next door, but he expressed himself with loud and profane approval. He walked back and forth, cheered, with the exultance of a fat man who had suddenly reached the end of an arduous pilgrimage.

"Three cheers for the Pope, Sweeney! This strikes me as pretty good."

Sweeney removed the pipe from his wooden face and grunted.

"If Comrade Max Wroblewski were with us, this would be the place for him. With a skull-cap on he'd look like a bishop."

"That he would," remarked Zellner; then, as if to

himself, "and he'd be the one to pass around the collection plate at the end of a pole."

The next Sunday morning the four of the household, with Cyril carrying the broom and tools, went up to the old church and began setting things to rights. The pews were the first to go. They were of ponderous walnut and defied lifting.

"We've got to kill the Bethel look of the place, somehow," the master said.

Fired with iconoclastic zeal, he pried rollers under them, and all hands helped to shunt them into the back room. Then they dragged up secular benches from the crypt. The stained glass window he did not mind. It had beauty in it, and good workmanship in the leading. The morning sun struck and outlined the conquering archangel and the doves, and in the air, tinted chartreuse, the dust in suspension glinted like powdered gold-leaf. A dozen of the shopmen came in, stiff in their best clothes, stood about, admired, and made unhelpful comments. Bertha departed, and Cyril, who had swept prodigiously under her eye, went away.

"This dust has got in my throat, and I'm as dry as Bibles," said Foster Sweeney after he had helped them for an hour. He picked up the broom and hammered violently on the wall, shouting as if he were calling for a distant crane. In two minutes a flustered bartender appeared at the rear door of the church.

"Lay off of that racket, can't you?" he pleaded.

"What's going on here—a murder? We got a Sunday closing law here and we can't have the cops in our place. We try to run it respectable."

"There'll be a murder here mighty soon if you don't bring in some beer," said Sweeney. "This was the quickest way I knew of finding it."

The bartender waved a palliative hand. "All you want, gentlemen! Only, knock kind of easy on the wall. Tap-tap, just like that. My head was right there, and that awful noise all of a sudden—not what you'd expect from a lot of Church gentlemen—scared hell out of me."

He disappeared, to lurch in shortly with a tray covered with brimming mugs. They were emptied to a ringing toast. Two more rounds went down. Sweeney, standing in the middle of the floor where the sunbeam fell upon him, assumed the posture of the archangel and gave a stentorian shout. The bartender wrung his hands at the door.

"Ganymede, we have a plaint to utter. Can't immortals get enough to drink in this joint? Those eyecups are too small. Trundle in a keg and broach it and bring in a basketful of dippers."

The keg was forthcoming. Sweeney and Voight helped lift it upon the rostrum, after removing the pulpit, and the spigot was driven in. Zellner rumbled mirthfully, and after his mug was filled, called out: "Comrades, a toast to Foster Sweeney!"

After it was drunk, Bram departed, and Zellner spoke again.

"Sweeney, you recite off to us all the names of those Irish kings."

Bram returned to the house. It was late afternoon, and he was hungry. Something would have to be done about the meals. Their irregularity annoyed him. Whoever got up first made a pot of coffee. The dinner was always an accident. There were times when Bertha brought home chops and tinned peas, or vinegary things from the delicatessen, which was worse. When she did, there was a meal; when she did not, there was none. A thick slice of rye bread and some cheese the master regarded as a feast. At times he would vaguely descry game, talk about it for a week, then come home with a dressed rabbit, which he cooked elaborately with herbs, and get it done around bedtime. He was inordinately fond of rabbit. Bertha preferred to dine afoot, walking from one end of the room to the other, biting at a triangle of pie. The night before, they had supped on matzos, a tin of sardines, chocolate éclairs, and bottled beer.

"Hello, Bertha. What's edible in this house?"

She was in Zellner's chair, smoking and reading in a large book. "I think there's some apple-pie left," she said, turning over a leaf. "Veronica was over, and she insisted on cooking. And there's a tin of milk somewhere around, if Cyril hasn't used it all up."

Bram discovered these dishes, and they made him

a gelid repast, which he ate without complaint. He would not have hurt her feelings on any provocation, and, besides, on the point of housekeeping she had no sensibilities whatever.

"My dear, what are you reading?"

"Oh, the chapter on trade guilds in Hyndman's *Historical Basis.*"

"Good. Put it away and talk to me. Fill me up with conversation. That'll help. You know, in this house it's high thinking, low living, and the cat to lick the plates."

"I'm sorry. I told Cyril to bring in some stuff, but I suppose he forgot. Musicians are temperamental. You can't depend on them. Where's Fritz?"

"Getting drunk with the committee, and Foster Sweeney is telling him about the kings of Munster. They'll be here around seven o'clock, if Sweeney gets through by then."

"That's good for Fritz. The Old Man has been riding him pretty hard lately, Bram. I am glad he is over the hump."

They talked together until past eight, when the committee entered, enlarged by interested members. They seated themselves on chairs, on the window-sills, on the floor. A hush fell when Zellner got up and stood with his back to the fireplace and gazed at the assemblage.

"Our aim," he said, "is the diffusion of liberal thought and ideas that will tend to the emancipation

of the labouring class. With our methods all of you here are familiar, since all of you were members of the United Workers, of which this present body is the offshoot. As a political and economic body we shall favour that great society known as the Socialist Labour party. For the present we shall work alone. I offer myself as chairman. As the advisory committee I propose the names of Wilhelm Voight, Ottokar Bachich, Foster Sweeney, Abraham Dartnell, and Bertha Sados Mankowitz. The organization is completed. The first meeting will be held at headquarters a week from Thursday night."

He talked in loud, brief strokes, as if removing an impediment with chisel and hammer. Ratifying buzzes sounded all over the packed room, and then there was silence. The gravity was oppressive. Perhaps a longer speech might have introduced a note of lightness, a little enlivening fire. The faces of the shopmen, solemn and crafty, were still tense and expectant. Zellner remained silent. He had said enough. There had been talking enough previously, even too much. He seemed to recall it as he stood there looking at them, with head lowered and tiny lines of derision playing around the corners of his mouth. He put snuff to his nostrils and sat down.

Through the flux of thought arose a voice that mounted in strong feeling.

"Without organization no work can be done. Lone effort is futile. Unity, whether in a cathedral or a

plant like the Atlas, is the product not of one mind, of one hand, but of thousands of minds and hands. The noblest and most powerful ideas of man are abortive unless crystallized into formulas, into platforms. The French Revolution . . ."

It was Mungo Jeens, standing by the door. Nobody paid much attention to him. They never did, outside of the shop. He was a child of the Atlas and had no existence apart from it. When he had done, Ottokar Bachich got up. A rigid and leathery little man, with spectacles and an Adam's apple that bobbed up and down inside a celluloid collar much too large for him, he made a dry and pointed speech in the conversational manner. Then somebody else talked. Then Bertha spoke.

She was the only one that spoke with fire. Her talk was as brightly coloured as her shawl. She stirred a pride within him, and then an uneasiness, as if it annoyed him to see her in the unfamiliar aspect of a public speaker and he did not want to share her presence with all that crowd. She talked with a clear voice and self-possession, though most of the time she kept glancing at the master, as if to seek his approval. After that the meeting was over, and the visitors left.

"That Bachich," said the master, with his hand on the knob of his door, "that Bachich was not bad. Not bad at all. He's got brains. There's some good men in the core-making gang down in the brass-foundry." He nodded to himself. "Good-night."

Bertha smiled faintly as she sat down again. Bram gave her an encouraging glance. Of late she had been less assertive. She had not the old dash and headiness. And just now he caught a flicker in her eyes that might have been incertitude.

"You spoke very well," he said. "All this was a good start, I hope."

"Yes. I know he will keep up."

"There wasn't any blather. I don't suppose you could call any of them cranks. That is, offensively noisy cranks."

"They did go in for reasoning, somewhat. That kind is strong for reasoning."

"Quite right. Not very emotional. I don't know how far they will go. You see, the worst of promulgating ideas is that you've got to be a sort of street revivalist. You've got to be a lyric tenor and convince people through rhapsody. And when you have convinced their emotions, along come the level-headed ones and take things out of your hands and run them to suit themselves."

"You're thinking of Max Wroblewski."

The voice of the Atlas siren quavered through the darkness, like the admonishment of an unsleeping and watchful mother. "Get to bed—get to bed—it'll be morning soo—oon," Bram hummed in initiative diminuendo. Bertha, with her chin pillowed on her propped forearms, smiled drowsily.

"He was an example," he said. "That type does get in."

"It won't this time."

He was not so sure. Zellner, the practical, who considered at times what went on in the outside world, often spoke of Mazzini and affirmed his greatness. Yet Mazzini, during his apostolate, was looked upon by practical men as a troubadour, or a nuisance. It was left for the spruce Cavour, whose blood ran as slow as a lizard's, to make his gospel effective. It was not enough to be a seraph and sing. There had to be accountant minds, precise and heavy-beamed men, who could sit endlessly on stools and get things down to brass tacks. Max Wroblewski would have made a good accountant. Statistics, finance, and political chess—that was his food. No lyricism for Max Wroblewski. Let others do the requisite singing.

But Zellner knew a lot, too. He might pull things through this time. Outside the Atlas, where he knew his fellow-creatures, all similarly conditioned by environment, he might make a slip, but he was no fool. It was not for nothing that he was the master. He was a wise ant in his own hill.

The eleven days went by. The United Workers, under the ægis of the Bebel Club—that was the new name—held a successful meeting. Two hundred attended, and the hall was filled. Zellner, impressive in a new and glazy black shirt with a white collar and tie, read the preamble, the constitution, and the by-

laws. Foster Sweeney, Voight, Bachich, and a cabinet-maker named August Wundt, made speeches. Then Bertha appeared and stood on the rostrum. Again he felt that he was sharing her with that crowd, and, being near the door, he slipped out into the dripping fog, displeased at he knew not what.

He remained waiting for her in the vestibule, with his coat-collar turned up. The fervency of the applause was unmistakable.

"What did you think of my talk?" she asked him, as she came out with Zellner at the tag end of the crowd. "Did you like it?"

"The talk was very fine," he said unhappily.

She looked grateful. Zellner nodded, rather gratified.

"She did well. Got over a couple of good points, I thought. As good a speech as the one August Wundt made."

Bram felt more miserable still. Perhaps she did belong to another sphere, and this was one of the moments when she seemed remote from him. There were even times when he doubted the genuineness of his passion. He was not feeling romantic just now. The grind at the shop that day had been wearying, and for over a week of nights he had been labouring over that edition of the *Monthly Worker* which they had brought out to announce the formation of the club. That had done him up. He was tired, sleepy, and confused, aware of nothing but the drops of water falling

on to his neck from the eaves, the odour of Bertha's rubber overcoat, and the warmth of her arm. They trudged home in the slush, with Bertha between, splashing through with her arctics and alertly talking of practical things with the master.

The next Sunday Zellner had gone down to spend the morning with Voight to play chess and dine with him. In the house Cyril prepared a slight meal, and when that was over, Bram announced that he was going for a walk.

"I'll come with you," Bertha said.

It was the coldest and brightest day of the winter. They walked to the end of the street and into the park over snow that was frozen. So cold it was that all life might have been suspended. They walked arm-in-arm over bleak white mounds, and as they neared the trees, a light wind blew towards them a sound as of innumerable tiny bells ringing in a far-off world. They wondered from where it came. The frost had come sharply on the heels of a night thaw, and the trees were sheathed in ice that glinted from root to topmost branch with gem-like colours. The beaded twigs threw off gleams of polarized light. Underneath a Gothic arch of branches Bertha paused and looked up. She drew herself up in the attitude of a dancer and pointed.

"You are not looking," she said after a moment.

"I am looking. What do you see?"

"The little bells. Don't you see them—those upper-

most small twigs, all ice, knocking together in the wind?"

Her cheeks, reddened by the cold, were framed in the white fur of her hat and collar and the sleeve she had put up to her warm, exposed throat. He put his arm about her waist. Though he drew her tightly, she insisted on looking steadily upward. That was her smiling obstinacy. He kissed her cheek, and she did not move. He kissed it again. It was smooth, like porcelain.

"There, there—I've showed you enough bells. I can't keep pointing all day. We shall freeze."

They walked on, with arms entwined, and down familiar streets, which now looked strange, and they came to the club-house that was once a church. Bram opened the door with her key. They sat on a bench against a wall, like a pair of worshippers, and she leaned her head against his shoulder. Their breath steamed out in the chill air, but they did not feel the cold.

"I think we should be married."

She did not move. She was pressed close and comfortably at his side and could speak as well without stirring.

"Yes," she said, "I think so."

There was no more to be spoken, not for an hour, and the bright archangel, enhaloed by the sun, levelled at them his trumpet and poured out music, a golden serenade of such tranquillity that even when

the sun went down, they had stirred no more than the doves about his head. They left the club and reached home after darkness had fallen. Before they entered, Bertha adjusted her hat with both hands and opened the door after a long and straining clasp on his wrist.

Zellner, with a magnifying-glass at his eye, was carving at the ring caught in the vice attached to his chair-arm. He did not look up. Work of this delicacy mesmerized him, and his consciousness was lost in the intricate corridors of his mind. They watched him and listened to the firm, tiny rasps of the burin. He blew on the seal, with its design of thorns and skull.

"Fritz, I know you will be glad to hear I am going to marry Bram."

He looked up suddenly, with the expression of a lost child. Then he rose, took off his glasses, and after a pause said: "That is very good." He bowed to them gravely and shook hands with them in his stiff German fashion.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE lecture was over, and before the applause had set in, Bram left and entered the saloon next door. The overflow crowd of Atlas workmen almost filled it, and they stood arguing in groups or talking with much gesticulation at the tables. Gas-jets flared in lowering clouds of tobacco smoke, and it was like a scene in a drama of coarse realism that was being rehearsed informally while the chief actors were off stage. Ganymede, wiping the bar, gave him a nod, held up five fingers through the smoke-laden air, then pointed to a corner table. It had been preempted by the device of tipping the chairs forward against it. Bram sat down to wait. Many heads nodded familiarly at him, then turned to glance at the door. He lit a cigarette and fixed his attention on the welter of movement and din about him. This saloon, adjoining the Bebel Club, was a back eddy that had almost as much life and swirl in it as the main stream in the Atlas. The flow was not meaningless. Discipline was visible. Radial points were Foster Sweeney, at the bar; the cabinet-maker, Wundt; and other spirits that fortified little groups. From one knot Jeens and Trego detached themselves and came over to him.

"Sit down," he said. "They'll be here in a minute.

Where's Haggertha? I thought he was coming along with you."

"He was," said Trego, uncomfortable in his Sunday clothes and in the presence of Jeens, who sat benign and mystical, with his arms folded. "But Boston got liquored up this afternoon. He does every Sunday. And Fido trailed along with him to see he didn't get into no trouble."

The sound abated, and Jeens, who had begun to fill his pipe, got up. Zellner and the lecturer had come in. The master wore his loose black hat, pulled down truculently over his eyes, and had his hands thrust into the belt encircling his paunch. He lumbered through with sullen disregard of those making way respectfully for him. At the table he gave a perfunctory wave.

"LeTigre, there's Mungo Jeens, philosophical anarchist; Bentley Trego, of the machinists' bunch, and Dartnell. You've met him before."

The speaker gripped the hands of each; then they took their chairs. Ganymede rushed over with the beer.

"Dutch treat, comrades, if you please," intoned the guest.

"Not here," said Zellner, dropping his heavy fist on the table.

"I should like to insist."

There was a principle with the speaker, and Zellner gave in with a grunt. The celebrated Daniel Le-

Tigre, propagandist and writer of vast output, had many principles, which most people took to be foibles. One was to wear about his neck a white scarf, which he scrubbed with his own hands in hotel washbowls. He believed that collars were the badge of a parasitic class, a vanity that imposed useless toil on laundry workers, and their use contrary to the ethical principles of the revolution. Something bleak and austere hung about him. His pallor, Sephardic nose, and erectness gave him, lacking but the hood, the complete appearance of an Inquisitor. He pulled out a sack of tobacco and rolled a cigarette. Zellner, who disapproved of cigarettes, made as if to offer him *a* cigar, then refrained, awkwardly.

"A philosophical anarchist?" he mused, turning his black and lustrous eyes full upon Jeens. Zellner chuckled inwardly, then took a gulp of beer. He expected annihilation for Jeens. But fireworks did not supervene. LeTigre met the straight look of the operator of the great lathe, saw its rectitude and light, then gave a murmur of interest.

"It's logical, of course. You get at it by sound reasoning, Jeens. Argue round the circle, and you get there again. It's the one perfect belief in an imperfect world. Most men blow up with a pinch of philosophical anarchy in their skulls. But if you can stand it, I advise hanging on to the belief. It is a belief in nothing at all, but better than none."

Zellner listened, glowering, with hands clutching

the table rim. LeTigre was a lawyer, and that tribe he distrusted, even though this one was a spokesman for the right side. His talk that night on "Workers and the War, or the Folly of Slaughter," was comprehensible. But his dalliance with Jeens was not.

LeTigre leaned back and talked ex cathedra like a superior and disillusioned ecclesiastic. His head was an arsenal of terrible knowledge. He talked of miners. He began with the early Phœnicians, the Incas, the mercury-diggers in the Fugger regime in Spain, the salt workers in Siberia, the Kaffir labourers in the Transvaal. Through the centuries his mind winged tirelessly over dreary and frost-nipped tundras, swooping now and then to pick up a roc's egg of facts that glittered to their fascination, then dropping it with indifference. He knew too much. Having searched all his life for truth, he still was searching, but had lost belief in its existence. He returned bored after a flight over the universe and talked on books. Jeens scratched notes on the back of an envelope.

"Of that book? It's hard to get. But I can have a copy sent you from a book-shop in Montreal. I will write to them. Your address?"

He extracted some paper from an envelope from the inside pocket of his black frock-coat, wrote off a note, and sealed it.

"Has any comrade a stamp?"

Zellner discovered one in his greasy note-book. LeTigre stuck it on the envelope, then pushed two cents

across the slopped table. The master slid them back with deprecation.

"That's nothing," he murmured.

"Accept them, please," said LeTigre. "A man's property is his own. It is his due, his trust. If he is careless of his own two cents, he may later find it less easy to be careful of another man's dollar. No worker in the Cause can afford to incur any risk which might lead to the weakening of his moral fibre."

It was like a cold, electric shock. The eyebrows of the mystical Jeens were pinched up in wonderment. At the clang of a distant street-car LeTigre looked at his watch and got up. Zellner, overcome with stupefaction at the rebuke, gathered himself up slowly with the two cents in his palm. All five then went out to the street corner. The propagandist shook hands with them urbanely, jumped aboard the car, and was gone.

Jeens broke into a malicious smile. "There's an improvement on the rest of mankind," he said. "He's gone up in a chariot of fire. Fritz, you didn't distinguish yourself tonight."

The master looked stupidly at the coins in his palm; then he tossed them into the mud.

"Come along, Dartnell."

Bertha and Veronica were waiting them in the house. Zellner took off his coat and slumped into his chair with the snuff-box on his knee.

"Well, I ditched those two cents anyway," he chuck-

led with satisfaction. "He's a good man—but, damn it, a man can be too good. And he went too far in encouraging that windbag Jeens in his fool ideas. Veronica, make some coffee for us."

Veronica brisked, tied on an apron, and went into the kitchen, with Bertha to help her. In a few minutes the aroma of coffee suffused the flat. Zellner, administering himself snuff, rocked in his chair and cursed irritably, still thinking of the stamp episode. He took it better than Bram had expected, for ever since the outbreak of the war he had been in ugly spirits. He was quarrelsome, morose, and shifty-eyed. The war orders had not improved his temper. At times, Bram thought, he looked upon Bertha's marriage as a personal injury. He missed her about the house, and not even Veronica's installation as housekeeper four months before had reconciled him to the loss. Though that had not been anticipated.

"Dartnell," he said, "we've got to keep after them! Hat-peg's putting on the screws, and something's got to give way. It might as well be Hat-peg." He swung about, with great hands clenched on his knee. "Le-Tigre had the proper idea. The workingmen can put a stop to all this war silliness before it gets any worse. Nail the bosses first, that's the next step."

Bram, sitting in his accustomed chair, nodded at him. The master had always to be conciliated.

"I've done pretty well for you, haven't I? I've put some working ideas into your head. You were pretty

green when you came here, but I taught you. And in the shop you're as handy as the next man in my picked crew. You can rough and finish a job as good as most, and faster than anybody else. Hat-peg allows that. Cutters, bushing reamers, boring tools, gauges, jigs, special drills, taps, tempering and grinding jobs—I've put you wise to everything. They know what you can do. And Hat-peg and old Banks will hate you for it. You'll get the proper respect of the boys when you're a bit older. Monkey-wrench mechanics don't like first-class men, but they respect them. And the Hat-peg category are afraid of them, because a man who knows all about his job has a queer way of knowing a whole lot else. And that's what scares them."

He gave himself more snuff, and for the first time Bram saw dream in his eyes. They were incredibly moist. The master flicked his nose with a large, competent thumb and rocked away.

"You'll do it, Dartnell. You've learned to stand on your feet now and strike back at the Hat-peg. I'm proud of you. You did a good job on that triple milling-cutter job. I never had a son of my own, but I've watched you as if I was a father, and no father is ever fooled. He may try to fool himself on a kid, but he never quite does. You've got a good woman, too. If I do say it myself. Damn good thing you took her away from here. A man can dig up a clean shirt in this house now, if he keeps on looking hard enough. Yes, sir—"

The bell rang just as the two women came in from the kitchen with the coffee. All four looked at each other. Then Bertha opened the door. Wilhelm Voight and Haggertha stood there, hats in hand. Haggertha tugged miserably at his collar.

"What's happened?"

"Boston," mumbled Haggertha. "He got his skin full this afternoon, and I had a job draggin' him home. Voight and me, we locked him up in his room, and we thought we had him safe. Then he busted out, got into Hat-peg's room, which was next door, and poked him in the stummick."

"Tell him to rub on some arnica. We'll give him some from the bottle we keep handy in our corner. Boston has lambasted everybody in our gang."

"He won't any more, I'm afraid," said Voight. "Unless you run down to the railroad station and offer to stand sponsor for him. Hat-peg blew up, lost his temper, and called for the police. Boston will be taken back to the jug for violating his parole, after all that rotten trouble we had signing to get him out. You'd better telephone to Porson."

The master communed for some time, then slapped his thigh.

"That's good! You can see me ask Hat-peg for favours, can't you? We tried to communalize Boston, but it wouldn't work. Bad chemicals, that pair, Voight. The less you mix with them, the better for you."

He laughed savagely, and when they were gone, he roared still louder.

"Something ought to be done, Fritz," said Veronica.

"No, nothing."

Bram thought of Haggertha's pathetic face, and felt touched by a sense of injustice. Nothing would be done. Absolutism was vested in the Hat-peg. That was the horrible thing of Shop Forty, of the Atlas, of life. Across from him the master, stirring his drink, was shaking his head as if credulity were wholly beyond him.

"The fat-head," he guffawed.

All morning Bram felt within him an inrush of rebellion. Porson was imperturbable and calm, though he sped back and forth with no less energy, and his voice rang in certain portions of the shop where he was more feared than elsewhere. He came twice into the enclosure, but when he entered, the backs of the men were turned upon him. He could not mistake the significance of those backs. The men were attending to business. The head of Zellner was bent devoutly over his cannon-ball vice. That phenomenon was visible wherever he passed. Backs, backs everywhere. He turned, paused, then wheeled angrily upon Bram, whose eyes were fixed on a whirring cutter in his machine.

"You're milling that for the navy job, aren't you? Well, you don't have to spend your life on it because

Uncle Sam wants it! You work up to ten o'clock tonight and get it done."

Bram inclined his ear politely, as if to catch the echoes.

"I shall require double time for that, Mr. Porson."

"Time and a quarter, like all the rest of the apprentices!"

"Double time. If you are not satisfied, then you might put somebody else on the machine."

Porson rubbed his forearms and glared. He shouted reproaches, swore in bitter disfavour of all apprentices, and looked about him with a harassed grin. His eye encountered nothing but backs.

"Take it, then," he barked, and strode off.

The backs turned, and Schlemmer came over approvingly.

"That was all right, but the next time give him a belt in the jaw."

The Government jobs increased, and the double time made an advancement in income for several months. He went home often in the dark and cold. One night towards the close of winter a dizziness seized him as he pushed open the door of his house. He had the delusion that a chaos of machinery barred his path. Wheels, shafts, zigzag and gyratory apparatus filled the staircase and gave him vertigo. He squirmed up inch by inch through precarious openings, and he had not gained the top before the mass sagged and pinned him to the step. The Hat-peg and

Council Banks pointed at him derisively and danced like phantoms. This endured for centuries; then somebody carried him up. He fought back, but was held down in a world of white.

He was ill with pneumonia for two weeks. Bertha herself nursed him. Sometimes he slept, and Veronica took her place. At the coming of spring he was convalescent. When he was recovered, he went back to the shop.

He had lost much time, and felt aware that both the club and the paper had suffered, and that the burden had been very heavy on the master. To an extent he made up for it, and in the summer he and his wife went out more. She insisted on his going to the park and, on Sundays, to an amusement resort three miles away by trolley, a place favoured by the younger working people.

It had a carrousel with a steam-organ and chariots drawn by swans and unicorns and red-nostrilled horses that pranced gallantly up and down. He did not like to play, and that used to puzzle his wife, but he loved to watch her ride. She sat so easily and upright, with her chip hat down on her smooth forehead. "Oh, Hey-day, Oh, Hey-day, Laddies and Lassies," was the melody the organ churned out, with yawps and jangling of cymbals. The spectacle gave him unutterable delight. Music went to her head; and, smiling and red-cheeked, she rode round and round with the shouting exultance of youth, waving to him each

time she passed by. In the clothes that she had made herself, she looked like a fashionable horsewoman.

He had a fantastic idea of buying her a horse. He wanted to buy her many things. But it had been a hard spring. His illness had depleted their funds, and Bertha had lost a month's wages by absence from the tie factory. An emerald ring that had belonged to his mother he sold to pay the obligation that pressed most heavily on their minds, their dues to the Bebel Club. Merely to work for it and get out the paper was not enough.

Their work was harder. Ever since March, when the country, despite the backward tug and the uproarious protests of the sane, as exemplified by the Bebel Club, went into the war, the master had changed. Often he clawed the glass from his eye and sat motionless on his stool, hunched and with mouth slack. Perhaps those were the black interludes when he pondered on Comrade Max Wroblewski.

Most portentous of all was the time when Porson, dashing into the enclosure, saw a new design of stamp in Zellner's vice. The master took it out. They speculated on the quality of the metal. Porson shifted the wad in his cheek, spat, and made a grudging comment on the workmanship. The thing pleased him. He was not unappreciative of workmanship.

"That's some carving, there."

"No, just a straight rough job, Hat-peg. I'll do you a piece of carving. Something in the way of a seal-

ring," he grumbled. "But give me time, give me time."

"A good piece of carving is not a bad thing to have," admitted Porson warily, rubbing his forearm.

Bram felt disturbed. It looked like a venture towards *rapprochement*. Only the gleam in the master's eye convinced him that the notable brain behind it was not giving way.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THERE was no escape from it. The war pushed into the Atlas, into the shop, like a miasma, a heavy barometric pressure that altered blood and brains and created a fever of the spirit. In the enclosure its voice alone created a malaise. Where the old men had filed, twin machines of menacing bulk gnawed hollow castings and moaned like gigantic bassoons. Back of the master stood a grinder with a beam that moved in a half-circle and abrased steel disks to the polish of a mirror, and in the traject across the revolving face the sparking corundum wheels screamed with the horrid insistence of a drill-sergeant. Schlemmer performed conjurations before it. His ears were plugged with wool. His nerves were vulnerable, and after two months of it his hair was patched with white.

The atoms in Zellner's body had not yet adjusted themselves, and the file trembled in his hand as he bent over his cannon-ball vise. Bram, working at his machine, looked at him with respectful pity and set it down to the vibration of the shop.

The machines were coming. With clatter of chain and rollers the machines bounced in by phalanxes. There were planers, electric saws, automatic and turret lathes, punch-presses, drills, grinders, buffing-

wheels, and boring mills, and they were set up and belted to pulleys hung from the ceiling. To the eye the galleries were as impenetrable as jungle forests. Long, unbroken rows of strangers in new overalls of bad and hasty American indigo were operating the machines with stiff and novitial caution, and hammering and filing at the benches.

There was an irruption of strangers. They were an alien race hated by the children of the Atlas. They diluted the strain and invaded the prerogative of men whose craft was their tradition, and that of their fathers before them. There were lean farmers of sterile fields; men sans trade, with thick hands and lompering gait; foundlings of the outdoors, that refuge of the timorous and defeated; poor relations of the towns; mongrels drawn back by the scent of bones to pick.

"Blood-money," cried Zellner at his vice, glaring down the aisle through his magnifying-glass. "Pariahs, camp-followers, prostitutes, robbers of the dead! Not a mechanic among them! God, what are we coming to?"

Schlemmer came over to Bram and, cupping his hands to his mouth, yelled cheerfully: "Old shop's standing up, Dartnell. There's only three of the old gang left here, but we're turning out the stuff, huh?"

Council Banks came up the aisle at a half-lope, conferring on the move with foremen who darted towards him, as from ambush, tagged along at his

side, then dropped off mumbling to themselves. He put Bram in mind of a magnet dragged by a string through a spread of iron filings.

"Council is keeping up pretty good, ain't he?"

He was. Banks had grown more metallic and indestructible with the years. His eyes gleamed like armour-plate drills, resting on no man's face for more than a second, as if at the first touch they had pierced the skull and extracted the worthless thought. He drove his orders as a Goth drove his sword, with cruelty and taut throat and stomach muscles. The men hated him for the terror he inspired in them and because he was a dandy. His worsted suits and foulard tie had never a wrinkle, and the carnation in his lapel was dew-wet every morning. And whenever he escorted distinguished visitors and French contract-agents with gold acorns on their kepis, he exhibited before the sullen eyes of the workers an affability that made them grit their teeth.

Porson was still at Banks's side. The two came to argument near the enclosure.

"You've got to drive them, Porson. The trouble with you is that you're too easy-going."

"Easy-going, eh? What do you think I'm doing? Handing them sponge-cake and malted milk?"

Porson's voice rose with crowing belligerence. He had cast off politeness in approaching him these days. Grease-smutched, angered with overwork, and with face drawn like a runner's, he no longer cajoled re-

plies, but snarled them out of him like a brindled dog getting bones.

"You'll have to use military methods, like in the arsenal where I served my time and learned what a day's work is."

"You think that would be faster, do you?" Porson drawled with sarcastic tongue. "I worked there myself, if you haven't forgotten. Why did I come back to these bleeding works? Because they were too slow.

"A damned arsenal apprentice spoils a breech-block pin worth ten cents. He tells the mechanic he's working for, and the mechanic tells the boss, and the boss tells the sergeant, and the word passes up to the lieutenant, the captain, the major, and then the major-general, and the major-general, who is sitting on a Bible, tells God Almighty about it. And then the word slides back, taking a whole week. And the mechanic kicks the apprentice in the pants and says: "Don't bother me, make another pin, you damned little—"

"I'm not asking you to explain why you can't get out more work, Porson. High-pressure them."

The rest of the talk died out in the clatter of the machinery, with Porson gesticulating and Banks striding away with beard thrust out like a prow.

Zellner emerged from behind a machine, rubbing his hands with waste.

"Did you hear that?" he shouted to all ears above the tumult. "Which dog will eat the other first? Dartnell, it's overtime for you again tonight. Overtime for

all of us until I don't know when. Can't help it. Dogs' orders."

Coming out late, he met Haggertha buttoning his coat at the door before a plunge into the rain. They entered a saloon in the Italian quarter, thrust their legs under the table, and drank beer.

"How's the old lathe standing up?"

Haggertha wiped the foam from his moustache. He sighed. "Didn't you hear all about me, Dartnell? Where have you been? How did you get out of breakin' in the new hands? They took me off the little old lathe, and they put on a Polack that's got fists on him bigger than hams. I seen him take a half-inch cut on low speed without throwin' in the back gear. The way she bucked and shivered on the job, I could of hollered out loud.

"The Atlas is gone t' hell, I tell you, Dartnell. The guy that's runnin' the next machine to Trego used to be a barber in Poughkeepsie. You never saw such a flock of bums, farmers, hop-pickers, and section-hands in all your life like we've got in the gallery right now. I broke in that mush-rat boss to run a drill-press last week. God help me if I didn't. The barstard claimed he couldn't recall my face. He was scared I would of fired him. If it wasn't for the garden and Trego, I'd quit. But they won't compel me to wear a white collar."

Haggertha drank gloomily. "I might quit anyway. Trego's breakin' 'em in 'way off in the new engine-

shop. He's sore. He can quit if he wants to. So can Fritz. There's nobody dependent on us. You've got to stay on, Dartnell—being the only one that's hooked up."

He rambled on in a depressed state, brightening only when he damned farmers and the Hat-peg, who had divorced him from his lathe. Waving his brier, he hinted with melancholy that he might not return after pay-day.

"You'll do nothing of the sort, I suppose," Bram said. "Nobody does. They stay on. The Atlas gets them, and they are done for."

He sprang to his feet. He had forgotten the meeting that was to be held that night. The long working evenings so merged into days, with little sleep between, that he had difficulty in marking the flow of time. There was a row on. It was even conceivable that a strike might happen. A large body of the older mechanics had been told off to instruct the regiments of new workers, and they had demurred. Banks had threatened them and had bullied the committee in a most brutal fashion, raving and shooting out his cuffs at them, and they had demanded a day and a night to consider. If it had not been for the walk-out, the solution would have been obvious.

But Zellner had still his hopes.

"You're coming up, aren't you? The committee is holding an open powwow at the club."

"No. To hell with them. They're no good to us.

They're done for, too. They're all wearing silk shirts."

It was eleven o'clock when Bram reached the club. As he had expected, the meeting was over, and already the crowd was filing out; they moved past him as he stood wearily in the draughty vestibule. There would be no strike. There would be no further protest. He could tell that by their manner. Smoking, and with hands in pockets, they emerged either satisfied, or in low-voiced indifference, and with a general air of being impelled by forces the strength of which they could only guess at, but not wholly evil; benign, rather, since they had brought about a sense of power and a little more pay. Bram wondered why they should attend a meeting at all. Their faces were darkened with no grudge. In fact, their row was but a lovers' quarrel with the Atlas.

Behind her desk in the smoke-filled nave was his wife, making blue pencil marks on the letters piled up before her. All the affairs of the club came under her hands. She had managed it for over two months. The sudden multiplicity of details had confused him, and Wilhelm Voight, the secretary, became morose, had not the spirit to cope with them. The two were still on the rostrum, motionless in their chairs. Veronica was on a bench, and in the back row was a man sitting with a patent air of casualness. Bertha lifted a hand as if to take up a sheet of paper, then motioned at him in a gesture to retire. He backed out and crossed the street to wait there in the obscurity.

It was the police again. It was getting more and more difficult to keep them out. Four of the club members were suspected of being spies. Well, they would have little to report tonight. The door opened, and the man came out, paused on the side-walk to light a cigarette, then walked on. His very gait betrayed him, he walked with meandering slowness, looking, looking into the fog with slow turnings of his head. Another figure, coming from an alley, joined him; then both were gone. Unpleasant fellows. He would have to look out for the master, he and Bertha.

Zellner appeared first, coming heavily down the steps, resting on his cane at the bottom and waving his hand as if he were arguing conscientiously to himself. The women descended after him. Voight with a mumbled "Good-night" set off alone.

They walked home in silence. Zellner unlocked the door, pushed in first, and lumbered up the black well of the stairs, knocking testily with his cane. They could hear his irascible expulsions of breath. At the top he paused, shuffled, and struck a match, which flared and cast on the ceiling a monstrous and nodding shadowgraph. As if the light had also dispelled doubt, he turned and bobbed his head at them in affirmation.

"They haven't got the brains!" he shouted. "Fine lot of Americans! Babblers of the Babble Club! Scared of the Hat-peg, scared of the Atlas, scared of

the war, scared of everything. But we'll show 'em, Dartnell, we'll show 'em!"

The match expired, and darkness swept in with the deep-toned, guttural murmur of the Atlas siren. Against it the master's voice boomed on with the resolute and imperious laugh that was like an expression of faith. Veronica stirred, then pushed up dutifully after him. Bram remained still, flat against the wall, listening to the stamping upstairs and oppressed by a sense of futility and pathos. Bertha plucked at his arm, and he descended.

Well, he for one was not scared. He was not able to do much, but he would have to stumble on, tagging after the still hopeful master. His apprenticeship was just over—somewhat late, for he had lost much time. There were some in the shop who regarded him as an equal, but they were the older mechanics, whose feelings were governed by benevolence, and therefore to be discounted.

In the morning he had gone to fill an oil-can from some greasy tanks at the end of the shop, and he had hardly got there before a boy ran up to him.

"You'll have to go back right away, Dartnell. Hatpeg wants you."

What the devil did Porson want? Some trouble on foot, doubtless. There might even be questions about their meeting. He took his time about returning. Porson and Zellner were staring at the grinder which had the arm that moved in a semicircle. It was a compli-

cated machine, looked upon with distrust. Where was Schlemmer?

"Dartnell," said Porson, lifting a dissatisfied head, "you'll have to run this thing. Very important, those disks. Got to be perfect, or the Government will raise Cain around here. And when Schlemmer gets well, you stay on it. It's no job for a sick man."

When he was gone, Bram started up the grinder.

"Any damn fool can run that junk-pile," grumbled Zellner, giving himself snuff. "But Council and Hat don't have to know it, nor do you have to get a swelled head. I'll put Schlemmer back on again tomorrow. He don't like overtime—got too much sense—so I let him go off on a little drunk."

Most of the mechanics in the shop regarded the grinder with awe. Schlemmer had put on a white collar when he took it over, and he spent much time working out radii and bisections, so he could adjust the dials properly. Outside of Bram and Zellner and the engineer who designed it, he was the only one in the shop who could make head or tail of the process. Bram felt that, in an oblique, tactful way, that truth should be made known to Porson, and if he were already aware of it, then he should be reminded. Today would be the proper time.

At noontime Porson was never at his desk. He was behind the wire partition in the mezzanine floor, playing cards with Wilhelm Voight, and whoever invaded it at that time committed treason. Workers in their

right mind who had personal affairs to lay before him never considered doing it until after lunch, when he was erroneously supposed to be feeling "better." Granted a turn of luck at cribbage and ease in the gastric department, he was not unapproachable at this time. Bram came up to him.

"What is it, Dartnell?"

"I believe I should have the same pay as Schlemmer. I don't like that sliding-scale which gives only half the full pay for the six months after completion of apprenticeship. Will you please give me the same rate as Schlemmer?"

Porson raked his unshaven chin with his knuckles. His smile turned out to be a lifting of the lip over the canine tooth. He turned his back, wetted a thumb, and flicked over a sheaf of order flimsies, and grumbled at the idiocy of clerks in the main office, who ought to be shot. Then he spoke over his shoulder.

"Get back where you belong."

"I'll take the matter up with Mr. Banks."

The foreman stiffened as if he were paralysed. He raised a fist, but his voice was not congruous with the menacing gesture. He spoke in a soft whine.

"Go on, see him! If he fires you, you're damned lucky to be out of it. Qualified mechanics! Once there was mechanics here, but now there's only a lot of dubs that would be swinging manure-forks if God had His say about it. Even the apprentices are getting on their high horse."

Some of the fire had gone out of him, or else he was not himself that day.

Back again at the machine, Bram waited for the superintendent to come along. At three o'clock he appeared, an upheaval of energy in splendid worsted, pricked with a red carnation in the lapel, and attended by a retinue that decreased in ratio to his progress. When he came close, none was with him but Porson. Bram stepped into his path.

"My name is Dartnell, sir—"

"What of it—what of it?"

Bram talked with his eyes fixed, not on the glare, but at the beard, which was like a wedge of white marble.

"We don't do that here, Dartnell. Nothing like that. You can't ask for it. The contract is inviolable in the Atlas."

"Then I can break it outside of the Atlas. There are other shops, Mr. Banks."

Two foremen who had come up delicately withdrew. The wedge of beard quivered as if the superb body were impatient at the suppression of energy; otherwise the great man was calm, and his jaw began to champ mildly as if he had decided to pardon the sacrilege. He cast his eye upon the grinder, then turned a glare upon Porson.

"Why don't you attend to these things yourself? Give him what he wants."

Porson lifted his hands and began to argue as they

moved off. The master came over and considered a lump of waste in his hands.

"What did you do that for?" He spoke disapprovingly. "You're rushing it too fast. What did you mean, asking Council for favours?"

Bram felt intact. The miracle was not that he had gained his point, but that he had survived the basilisk contiguity of Banks and was intact. Eyes were turned upon him, from the machines, from the benches, and from behind distant posts. A protracted colloquy with Banks portended something. Wragg appeared at the glass door of the office and looked on, studious. Something had happened. In the sudden drift of circumstances Bram felt possessed. It was no more than he had anticipated.

"He gave them to me, if you call them favours. I gave him a chance to come back at me, but he didn't take it."

The master stroked his nose and spoke as if to himself: "Remember what I told you this morning. Don't get the swelled head. You're a good man, but Schlemmer is no fool, neither."

Bram was thinking of something else.

The machines at ten o'clock groaned themselves to a standstill. He hastened out with the rest and went straight to the print-shop. Bertha was there, going over proofs under a hanging light that had been swathed in yellow and glowed like a luminous pumpkin. He sat down to watch her. Overhead, above the

cobwebs, a chair creaked steadily. The master came down less often, and sometimes only that sound gave any indication that he was about the house. Not in a year had he scraped on his fiddle. When he was alone, which was usual, though Veronica was there now and then, he either dipped into a book and made notes, or carved on the ring in his portable vice.

"There, that's done. Now we can go home."

"You're not going upstairs first?"

"I think not. Something has got on his nerves tonight."

"It was nothing," said Bram, and he related the encounter with the great Banks. "I believe it means three times as much money."

"Oh!"

There was in that so much relief implied that it was his turn to look surprised. She was smiling at him, a lingering and significant smile that had a secret behind it. He guessed what it meant and smiled in turn.

CHAPTER TWENTY

In two hours more the night would be done, but the voice of the shop would keep on undiminished, driving and relentless. Men whose day had been overlong, and whose faces were grey under the arc-lamps, withdrew, and with their arms up as they pulled on their coats, they looked curiously like spectres making pathetic gestures of weariness and surrender. As each left his machine, another took his place. "Keep the handles warm"—that was the motto of the Hatpeg. His shout was like a whip-lash in the air of the gallery, hot and viscous, as in a den overcrowded with groaning and sweating dinosaurs. The automatic turret lathes droned and clicked, with their tools pushing off revolving metal under a steady swish of oil. The twin millers were braying sonorously like bassoons in a duet of remorse.

Schlemmer went by. "S'long, Dartnell. Nice summer night, huh? I'll be over to the Dutchman's, where there's black bottles with frost on the outside of 'em."

Bram leaned against his desk and watched. More large machines were bouncing in. The night-shift of millwrights, who were manipulating rollers and taut chains, looked at them in the manner of tired spectators. How could a filled jug hold any more? If this

kept up, a man would have to stalk about on stilts. The enclosure had lost its identity. It had not ended. There was an end to nothing in the Atlas, any more than there was in life; merely change. The machines had pushed through, and the enclosure had merged into the gallery, without any partition between. All the faces he beheld were strange. All except the master's, hidden by a pillar, from which he had brooded over too many changes. He had not got along well after all his men, one by one, had been shifted elsewhere, to be replaced by others whose competence was nothing to be proud of. He had been like the master of a ship that underwent in storm a mutation of deck and apparatus and crew after each league. He had shouted, but he had not shouted loud enough. In penalty the craft had been taken from his hands.

"Dartnell," Banks had said, marching towards him firmly, with Porson at his heels, "you'll have to take this job. We need a little more high pressure here."

Porson shoved a wad of yellow order slips into his hand, and he was left there, looking into the blank face of the master.

"Sorry, Fritz," he had said, lamely.

The master gave a wry smile, took snuff, and retired mute, to bend his head over his cannon-ball vice.

The Atlas had played a trick on them both, and he told Bertha of it with no sense of elation. She reflected a long time before replying. Women took things peculiarly. In her wise face, with a droll but perplexed

line coming into her Madonna forehead, he tried to read a reproach, but he could only see devotion and common sense.

"He will take it hard," she said. "He always gave out that the job meant nothing to him, and perhaps it didn't—until he lost it. We must keep on doing what we can for him. But at the same time you must not forget that you have a son."

How could he forget?

There was Porson now, bawling orders at a half-demented petty foreman who did not seem to know what a certain barrel of castings was all about. Nor did Porson, but he yelled as if he did.

"Dartnell," he exclaimed, wiping his brow as he came up, "what in time was I born for? Why don't they throw the fool gates off the hinges? They'll be sending in the Old Ladies' Home next, with pretty aprons and tack-hammers!"

Bram made no reply. The Hat-peg was his old foe, implacable and unchanging. He waved his arms and raved with a throat that was dried up. He was not happy at night, for he found it unsatisfying to quarrel with strangers. It took months, years, to find out all a man's vulnerable points. Greasier, haggard, and crowingly belligerent, he was appropriate to the scene. He was born to it, the third of his generation to have his being in the Atlas. That vitality, with its thrust, scream, and alertness in chaos was not to be acquired except by heritage.

He wove briskly in and out of the machines and passed behind Zellner. He wheeled about, for the master had spoken to him while opening his tool-box. Zellner drew out a small object and held it towards him. It was the ring. Porson received it, held it under the projecting light over the vice, nodded at the lines of the carved bezel, then left. Bram was touched with anger. Why shouldn't Zellner have ignored the man completely? That would have been the wiser course. The only ring for him would be one with a poisoned barb in it, and then the gift would have been comprehensible.

Porson moved down the aisle, turning the piece over in his palm. Then he stood transfixed. He hurled the ring away from him and then darted off into the shadows, as if propelled by fury. Zellner had put on his hat and coat and was walking out. He must have stayed late that night on purpose to present his gift. When he was gone, Bram picked up the ring where it lay under a machine. Could it be that Porson had taken offence at the design, a skull and thorns? The symbolism was certainly not sharp enough to prick his tough feelings. Bram held the flame of a match to it. Inside the band was a delicate line of words. They read: "To Hat-peg, in remembrance from Judas Max."

Despite the changed state of the world, Zellner's little jest was not a bad one, though late in the day. At least, Porson had been apprised that his connivance

with the infamous Wroblewski was no secret. Bram laid the ring on a casting, flattened it with a hammer, then dropped it into a pile of brass chips.

He leaned over the gallery rail and looked below. It was a crater of blackness at this end, distant from the lighted machines; a gloomy well, with phosphorescent gleams over motors. Two Government jobs, marine turbines, were humming like gigantic bumblebees. The sleepy test-engineers, stumbling around them with flash-light in hand to read the thermometers that were stuck on the bearings with putty, would keep their watch until dawn. In the shadow of a turbine he espied Porson, waiting, with his hat pulled down over his eyes. In three minutes Wilhelm Voight, carrying his lunch-basket under his arm, joined him, and they went out together. They lived in the same district, down by the river. Beyond that, so far as Bram could ascertain, they had nothing in common, except a passion for cribbage. Except, of course, their friendship. They were extremists so remote in thought that they must sometimes have regarded their friendship with ironic amusement.

Porson played no favourites. Voight was an enemy alien. A hundred men in the gallery were aliens under surveillance and had to report every morning to Wragg, who in turn telephoned the report to the police. Wragg rejoiced in it. Porson was indifferent. He was indifferent to everything that had to do with the outside world, indifferent to everything except the

Atlas and his shop, which he loved as a man might love a wife become an insane termagant, faithful to her through stubbornness and thought of old remembered days.

Bram locked his desk and turned to beckon over the chips-man on the night-shift.

"You are looking out for that bench, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir. There was marks on it the last two mornings, but I wiped them off before Fritz came in."

"Good. You keep on watching."

That order he issued nightly. The master had to be looked out for, and there was none now left in the gallery to do it but himself. Some of the ferocity preached in the papers and the pulpits had seeped into the shop, and even the most inoffensive of those who bore German names, whether they were citizens or not, opened their mouths only to say "yes" or "no." And, being thus mute, they incurred suspicion. When they came in to work, they found their benches, toolboxes, and material chalked all over with insulting phrases. This was a sport fostered by the Liberty Loan committee of the shop and approved by Wragg, a connoisseur of epithets, secret foe of all supposed radicals on the gallery, and chief blackjack-wielder in all the countless "drives" on the general pocketbook. Zellner was not immune from the insults. Bram, on coming in early, had seen his vice placarded with vapid abuse and had torn them away at the last moment.

He went out, keeping to the farther edge of the curb and walking smartly. Between the luminous piles of the buildings and the curb glittered the rifles in the arms of the hard-faced military guards. Bertha was already asleep when he got home. He retired with the sound of the midnight whistle in his ears. He arose, after a brief sleep, to what might well have been an echo of that earlier sound. He made his own breakfast and hurried down again. That was his manner of living.

Getting out the paper was a drudgery, and since it required more than he could give of his spare time, which was too scanty to be called leisure at all, he had given up helping with it. It had become a mild and toothless sheet, banned everywhere and read by nobody, not even the radicals, but kept alive because the advertising had already been paid for and because Zellner found a solitary joy in cutting out stuff from other papers to fill its columns. Bram had not been in the print-shop for two months, and then only when he had dropped in to bring home his wife. She was there with Veronica, and for almost an hour he had helped them. It might have been his imagination, but he thought the inside door had moved several times. Then it opened, while they were still unaware, and there was the master, in stocking-feet, looking at them. He might have been there for five minutes, listening, with eyes clouded with mistrust. On the way home he told Bertha.

"I was thinking," she said, after a pause, "that something has got into most of the people we knew."

"Either that, or in us."

The surveillance irked Zellner. The police had been so persistent in their inquiries into his movements that for the sake of the club he had resigned. At night he sat rocking in his chair, reading, taking snuff, and brooding, like a vedette with senses benumbed by vigil at some useless outpost and unapprised of the manœuvres of his comrades. Latterly they had made no manœuvres. The club had dwindled to two, Foster Sweeney and Wilhelm Voight, the irreconcilables. Even Veronica had gone.

At noontime Bram came up from the iron floor. Passing through the mezzanine, he heard loud and frantic thumps. It was Porson striking the iron door of the stockroom. No Voight appeared. That was catastrophic for Porson. The cribbage game would begin late.

"Where's Voight?" he shouted, when he saw Bram.

"Don't know. It's a warm day, and he may have gone out to the Dutchman's for something cool."

Porson sat down on a box of material near the door, munched a sandwich, and cast baleful looks through the screen. He was still there twenty minutes afterwards, sulking and affronted. Cribbage had a sedative effect on him. His nerves that early afternoon showed the effects of the deprivation. He nagged, barked, and even apostrophized the machines. When

Council Banks appeared, striding with full retinue down the aisle, Porson stepped into his path and made outcry like a bear that had been shot in the vitals. The two were always quarrelling these days. Another argument began, and they went at it hammer and tongs. It was over another trifle. Bram, like everyone else in the vicinity, bent an interested ear towards it.

"What's become of them?—that's the question! How can they put packing in those valves when there aren't any packing-rings? Banks, I ask you."

The foreman threw up his hands in tragic resignation, then looked drearily into Banks's face.

"The shipping-clerk delivered a hundred cases to the stockroom last night!" vociferated Banks. He was in splendid voice, a fog-horn in trousers. "I made that clear to you before."

"What stockroom, then? They weren't in ours this morning."

The retinue disappeared gradually; then Porson jerked his head to Bram, who followed the irate principals into the mezzanine floor. The wire door was still locked. Porson kicked it and hallooed. He swore with pious fervence, tried the various keys on his ring, then managed to open it.

"It's the first time Voight has been late. Must have gone off on a bat."

He went to the desk, opened a wooden index-file, flicked over the cards, extracted one, and held it out defiantly.

"There you are. Ten cases. Right down in black and white. Maybe if my eyes were better, I could read a hundred. There's none outside. You think I'm easy on him, do you? Don't think it! I've driven him as hard as you've driven me. I've made him stay every night to receipt and store all late shipments as soon as they came in."

"Then why don't you have the damned place kept open day-times when it's needed? Where's Voight?"

"Yes, where is he? You can answer that as well as I can."

They looked at each other, then about the room, which was as trim and ascetic as a cloister. It was very still. The sound of the machinery came faint like distant breathing. The pulse of life was far off. The desk was orderly. It had a neat row of catalogues, metal-workers' vade-mecums, a dictionary, and a volume of Heine's poems between two old brass valves that served as book ends. There was a photograph of an Uhlan officer, a very young man, in a silver frame. Around it was pasted a wide band of black paper. These details Bram took in as Porson strode down the narrow corridor between the long shelves piled with shop materials. Banks picked up a tumbler near the books, held it to the light, sniffed at it, then stood at attention. The tumbler was clouded and held a spoon.

There were scuffling footsteps, and Porson was com-

ing out of the corridor backward. He faced about and stared at them, like a child that had seen a ghost.

"Did you find him?" asked Banks.

"He's back there," Porson whispered. "All in a heap. Do you hear me?" Then, seeing the glass that Banks had put down, he made for it.

"Cyanide," said the other, quietly. "Had he any relatives"—he lifted the photograph—"except him? Son got killed, I suppose?"

"Him? That's Little Hans. He never grew up, except in Voight's head. You see, he died when he was very small, and Voight never got over it. You understand, don't you? There's more photographs of him around here—all ages."

Banks, peering at him, listened with grave wonderment. Porson sank upon an upturned keg, drew outspread fingers over his face, and shook as if he had been overcome with ague. He threw back his head and laughed hysterically.

"Of all the luck! Why should it all come to Voight? God, but he had it soft here, in the quiet, with nobody bothering him. But even he couldn't stomach it.

"Damn you, Banks—why don't you take a drink of that stuff and have done with it? Why don't you? You'd be better off, and us, too. How long's this going to keep up? Look what we're turning out, old Banks. Terrible junk made by farmers! Junk enough for ten wars—twenty wars—fifty wars! And it's been up to me to do the driving. We've drove off all the old gang

from the shop, Banks. Nothing but a lot of sheep here now. A man goes crazy living with a lot of sheep that can't fight back at him. How long's this going to keep up, Banks? Voight's well out of it, I tell you."

He dropped his face on his hands, yammered, and shook violently. Banks considered him in the thoughtful manner of a surgeon.

"Porson," he said, not unkindly, "you're not standing up to the job. You'll have to take hold of yourself. The trouble with you—" Then he paused, while the foreman slumped to the floor in a faint. Bram stepped forward, but the old man checked him.

"He's all right, Dartnell. Nerves just a little shaky, that's all. He pulled through that channel business in good shape, but a few other things sort of got him. As for Voight, you'd better go and have Wragg phone for the coroner. And—oh, have those graphite rings taken up. You'll be needing them."

Thereafter Council Banks kinged it in the shop, delegating powers to none. His direct suzerainty was a compliment to it, filling the old hands with pride, and flattering even the strangers, who began vaguely to feel what the old hands had always known—the greatness of Shop Forty and the preponderance of the Atlas in the scheme of the universe. Of his own priority in the scheme Banks had manifestly no doubts whatever. Bram watched him as he paced in the head-filling clangour of the gallery, tying in his mind all the threads that had fallen from the nerveless hands

of the still absent Porson; thinking in a turmoil of sound that he found meaningful and simple. Immaculate in his worsteds, groomed from his wedge of white beard to his banana-tan shoes, he was the conqueror, the invincible Goth, clamant and sagacious. He knew all that was going on. He knew all the untoward things that could possibly happen, and one could see in his shrewd and masterful glance, brightened by the flash of his natural teeth, that he had forestalled them. The Atlas was clever, but not so clever as old Council. Not yet, Bram reflected with admiration. In a few years it would break him, but while they battled on equal terms, he was its master.

Over the noise of the machines Bram heard the comments of the workers. "Looks like the chief's got something up his sleeve." "T' hell with him, he ain't scared of me." "He's waiting for Hat-peg t' come back. Hat-peg's gone on a swell drunk." "They say, when he falls off the water-wagon, he falls with the best of them."

But what they said was of no consequence, for they were not Atlas men. The true breed was wiser. Bram pondered on change. He had seen much of it in the few years he had been in the Atlas, perhaps too much of it. He thought of his apprentice days, and he was touched. His eyes fell upon the master, who was putting the last file-stroke on a letter in his cannon-ball vice. The white smudge of beard on his face was now habitual, and his hand trembled as from palsy. He

was like a broken old lion with a glazed, uncomprehending stare. The other morning, Bram recalled, he had dropped his file twice. And he was beginning to talk of his father. That was a bad sign. But the old master was a long way from being another Gran'pa Scoble. He removed the piece from his vice, polished it lovingly with his thumb, then laid it aside with regret, for it was done. The noon whistle blew. He opened a package of sandwiches, spread out a page of the *Monthly Worker* in which they had been wrapped, and began to read it, with lips moving. His expression was speculative. It was even possible that on that greasy page he descried gleams of hope for the eventual emancipation of his fellow beings.

Perhaps, like Porson, he had not changed much, merely lost his resiliency. Perhaps, after all, the Atlas had done for them both. Bram turned and saw Wragg coming towards him. He had never trusted Wragg since that lamentable affair of the birds and the night of Comrade Max Wroblewski's party, nor had he forgiven him. He was a harbinger, an ugly bird.

"The chief, Dartnell. He wants to see you downstairs."

"I'm coming."

More trouble, doubtless. Now what was the matter? Things had been going quite smoothly, so far. He descended and found Council Banks at the desk. And Porson was there, too. Porson had been ill. He had sloughed off weight, and his clothes hung loosely

on his frame. He looked weary, and he looked inefficient. Banks was tapping the desk and looking at Bram with approbation.

"Dartnell, I think you'll have to leave that routine up there. Porson can't stand the grind. He will rest up awhile, then he'll take the job in the stockroom, where it's quiet. You had better take over his work right now. Things have gone slack here. Better root out the soldiers, and high-pressure the rest."

After an æon of time he perceived that Council Banks was still there and looking at him inquiringly.

"Yes," he said, "I understand."

The Goth nodded. "Beyond that, it is all simple. Just a question of morale, so to speak. I've had close to fifty years of it."

Then they were gone, and he had a notion they had shaken hands with him. The whistle blew, and through the open windows Bram could see the heads as the stream of men hurried back again into the shop from the yards, from the avenue whither they had gone for lunch and beer. The silence was destroyed by an elephantine boom. That was the machine that had once been the renowned Coughlan's. He recognized the voices of them all, as the machines started up, one after the other, in swelling and discordant symphony. They were all full of meaning. The tool of one gave a scream as it encountered a glazed patch in an iron casting, and it sounded like a burst of sardonic laugh-

ter. He knew by the response of the subterranean gears that the machine was the one he had worked at as a neophyte. He smiled, then placed his hat on the hat-peg.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is composed on the Linotype in Bodoni, so-called after its designer, Giambattista Bodoni (1740-1813) a celebrated Italian scholar and printer. Bodoni planned his type especially for use on the more smoothly finished papers that came into vogue late in the eighteenth century and drew his letters with a mechanical regularity that is readily apparent on comparison with the less formal old style. Other characteristics that will be noted are the square serifs without fillet and the marked contrast between the light and heavy strokes.

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